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THE

WORKS

OF

The late Reverend

JAMES HERVEY, A. M.

Rector of Weston-Favell, in Northamptonshire.

VOLUME III.

CONTAINING THE REST OF

THERON and ASPASIO;

OR, A

SERIES of DIALOGUES and LETTERS,

UPON THE

Most *important* and *interesting* SUBJECTS.

For Zion's *sake will I not hold my peace, and for* Jerusalem's *sake I will not rest, until the* righteousness *thereof go forth as brightness, and the* salvation *thereof as a lamp that burneth.* Isa. lxii. 1.

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M DCC LXXIX.

WORKS

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JAMES HERVEY, A.M.

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Series of Dialogues and Letters,

Both Important and Interesting Subjects.

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THERON AND ASPASIO;

OR, A

SERIES

OF

DIALOGUES.

DIALOGUE XIV.

ASPASIO was employed in preparing for his journey. *Theron*, free from buſineſs, and diſengaged from company, had the greateſt part of the day to himſelf. Which he ſpent, in *reviewing* the ſubſtance of their late conferences; not without intermingled aſpirations to GOD, for the guidance of his divine SPIRIT.

At evening, he *went*, like the patriarch of old, *into the field to meditate* *; amidſt the calm of nature, to meditate on the grace of the goſpel.—The ſky was peculiarly beautiful, and perfectly clear; only where the fine *indigo* received an agreeable heightening, by a few thin and ſcattered clouds; which imbibed the ſolar rays, and looked like penſile fleeces of pureſt *wool*.—

* Gen. xxiv. 63.

All things appeared with ſo mild, ſo majeſtic, ſo charming an aſpect, that, intent as he was upon a different ſubject, he could not but indulge the following ſoliloquy:

"How delightful are the ſcenes of rural nature! "eſpecially, to the *philoſophic* eye, and *contemplative* "mind.—I cannot wonder that perſons in high life "are ſo fond of retiring from a conſpicuous and exalted ſtation, to the covert of a ſhady grove, or the "margin of a cooling ſtream; are ſo deſirous of quitting the ſmoky town, and noiſy ſtreet, in order to "breathe purer air, and ſurvey the wonders of creation, in the ſilent, the ſerene, the peaceful *villa*.

"'Tis true, in the country, there are none of the "modiſh, I had almoſt ſaid, meritricious ornaments "of that *falſe* politeneſs, which refines people out of "their veracity: but an eaſy ſimplicity of manners, "with an unaffected ſincerity of mind.—Here the ſolemn farce of ceremony is ſeldom brought into play, "and the pleaſing deluſions of compliment have no "place. But the brow is the *real* index of the temper, and ſpeech the *genuine* interpreter of the heart.

"In the country, I acknowledge, we are ſeldom "invited to ſee the *mimic* attempts of human art. "But we, every where, behold the grand and maſterly exertions of divine power.—No *theatre* erects "its narrow ſtage, ſurrounds it with puny rows of "aſcending ſeats, or adorns it with a ſhifting ſeries of "gorgeous ſcenery. But *fields* extend their ample "area; at firſt, lightly clad with a ſcarf of ſpringing "green; then, deeply planted with an arrangement "of ſpindling ſtalks; as a few more weeks advance, "covered with a profuſion of bearded or huſky grain; "at laſt, richly laden with a harveſt of yellow plenty.

"*Meadows* diſcloſe their beautiful boſom; yield a "ſoft and fertile lap for the luxuriant herbage; and "ſuckle myriads of the faireſt, gayeſt flowers: which, "without any vain oſtentation, or expenſive finery,

"outvie

" outvie each other in all the elegance of dreſs.—
" *Groves* of various leaf; arrayed in freſheſt verdure,
" and liberal of their reviving ſhade; riſe, in amia-
" ble, in noble proſpect, all around.—*Droves* of ſtur-
" dy oxen, ſtrong for labour, or fat for the ſhambles;
" *herds* of ſleeky kine, with milk in their udders, and
" violets in their noſtrils; *flocks* of well-fleeced ſheep,
" with their ſnowy lambkins, friſking at their ſide;
" theſe compoſe the living machinery.—Boundleſs
" tracts of bending *azure*, varniſhed with inimitable
" delicacy, and hung with ſtarry lamps, or irradiated
" with ſolar luſtre, form the ſtately ceiling.—While
" the early breezes, and the evening gales; charged
" with no unwholeſome vapours, breeding no peſti-
" lential taint; but fanning the humid buds, and wa-
" ving their odoriferous wings; diſpenſe a thouſand
" *ſweets*, mingled with the moſt ſovereign ſupports
" of health.—And is not this ſchool of induſtry, this
" magazine of plenty, incomparably *more delightful*,
" as well as infinitely *leſs dangerous*, than thoſe gau-
" dy temples of profuſeneſs and debauchery, where
" ſin and ruin wear the maſk of pleaſure? where *Be-
" lial* is daily or nightly worſhipped with, what his
" votaries call, modiſh recreation, and genteel amuſe-
" ment?

" Here indeed is no tuneful *voice*, to melt in ſtrains
" of amorous anguiſh, and transfuſe the ſickening
" fondneſs to the hearer's breaſt. No ſkilful artiſt,
" to inform the *lute* with muſical inchantment; to
" ſtrike infectious melody from the viol; and ſooth
" away the reſolution and activity of virtue, in wan-
" ton deſires, or voluptuous indolence.—But the *plains*
" bleat; the *mountains* low; and the hollow circling
" *rocks* echo with the univerſal ſong. Every valley
" remurmurs to the fall of ſilver fountains, or the li-
" quid lapſe of gurgling rills.—*Birds*, muſicians ever
" beauteous, ever gay, perched on a thouſand boughs,
" play a thouſand ſprightly and harmonious airs.

" Charmed

" Charmed therefore with the fineſt views, lulled " with the ſofteſt ſounds, and treated with the richeſt " odours, what can be wanting to complete the de- " light? Here is *every* entertainment for the eye; the " moſt *refined* gratifications for the ear; and a *perpe-* " *tual* banquet for the ſmell; without any inſidious " decoy, for the integrity of our conduct, or even " for the purity of our fancy.

" O ye blooming walks, and flowery lawns, ſur- " rounded with dewy landſcapes! how often have *pa-* " *triots* and *heroes* laid aſide the burden of power, " and ſtole away from the glare of grandeur, to en- " joy themſelves * in your compoſed retreats!—Ye " moſſy couches, and fragrant bowers, ſkirted with " cooling caſcades! how many *illuſtrious* perſonages, " after all their glorious toil for the public good, " have ſought an honourable and welcome repoſe in " your downy lap †?—Ye venerable oaks, and ſo- " lemn groves; woods, that whiſper to the quiver- " ing gale; clifts that overhang the darkened flood; " who can number the *ſages* and *ſaints*, that have de- " voted the day to ſtudy, or reſigned a vacant hour to " healthy exerciſe, beneath your ſilvan porticoes, and " waving arches? that, far from the dull impertin- " ence of man, have liſtened to the inſtructive voice " of GOD; and contemplated the works of his ado- " rable hand, amidſt your moſs-grown cells, and roc- " ky ſhades.—How *inelegant*, or how *inſenſible* is the " mind, which has no awakened lively reliſh for theſe " ſweet receſſes, and their exquiſite beauties!"

But

* ——————*Mihi me reddentis agelli*,
ſays *Horace* of his little country-ſeat.

† *Virgil* was ſo ſmitten with the amiableneſs of theſe ſcenes, that he aſſigns them as an habitation for happy ſpirits, in the regions of *Elyſium*.

——————*Lucis habitamus opacis*,
Riparumque toros, et prata recentia rivis
Incolimus.

But whither am I carried? Is not this *rural enthuſiaſm?* I find myſelf talking to trees; and forget the momentous queſtion, which waits for our deciſion. Here then let my rhapſody ceaſe, and my inquiry proceed.—Does it betray a want of true delicacy, to be inſenſible of nature's charms? My *Aſpaſio* thinks, it argues as wrong a taſte in practical divinity, not to acquieſce in the imputed righteouſneſs of *JESUS CHRIST*. To this doctrine I have been always extremely averſe. I ſet myſelf to oppoſe it with objections, drawn from the *reaſon* of things, and from various paſſages of *ſcripture*. To all which my friend replied. And though I was ſcarcely convinced, yet I was ſilenced by his anſwers.

I pleaded for the ſufficiency of our *ſincere* obedience; eſpecially, when accompanied with *repentance*, and recommended by the *merits* of *CHRIST*.—Neither was this attempt ſucceſsful. His arguments, ſomewhat like the flaming ſword, planted at the entrance of paradiſe, *turned every way* *, and precluded all acceſs to life on the foot of our own duty.

At length, *Aſpaſio* quitted the defenſive, and attacked me in his turn. He explained the precepts, and enforced the threatnings, of the divine law. So *exact* its tenor! that it demands a perfect and perſevering conformity to every injunction.—So *extenſive* its authority! that it reaches the inmoſt thoughts; and requires obedience, not barely in the actions of the life, but the very intentions of the heart.—So *inexorable* its ſeverity! that it condemns every the ſmalleſt offence, and curſes every the leaſt offender.

This remonſtrance had ſome of the terror, and almoſt all the effect, of a maſked battery. It was quite unexpected, and alarmed me conſiderably.—To puſh his advantage, he enlarged upon the *infinite purity* of GOD: A GOD glorious in holineſs; *who cannot look upon evil*, with any connivance, or without the utmoſt

* Gen. iii. 24.

moſt abhorrence; before whom the very heavens are unclean, and who will in no wiſe clear the guilty.

To complete his victory, he played off the doctrine of original *guilt*, and original *depravity*:—That, beſides the imputation of *Adam*'s apoſtaſy, beſides the commiſſion of numberleſs iniquities, we were born in ſin,—are, by nature, enmity againſt GOD;—in all our faculties corrupt; in every imagination evil;—and, even when renewed * by grace, are ſtill, ſtill tainted with ſome baſe *remains* of the old leproſy.

After all, he bid me conſider,—what fruits muſt ſpring from *ſuch a nature*?—how they muſt appear, when compared with *ſuch a law*?—what they muſt deſerve, when tried before *ſuch a GOD*?—Theſe, I muſt confeſs, are very weighty and ſtartling queries. If theſe repreſentations are true, the face of human affairs carries a moſt gloomy aſpect. Or rather, a moſt dreadful ſtorm is hanging over the children of men.—*Aſpaſio* urges me to fly, without any delay, to the covert of *CHRIST*'s meritorious obedience. This he ſays was wrought out in my name, and in my ſtead; this will be admitted, both at the throne of grace, and the bar of judgment, as my juſtifying righteouſneſs.

This, he adds, opens a way, on GOD's part, for the

* *Even when renewed*—For a diſplay of this important truth, and a remedy againſt this ſtubborn evil, let me refer the reader to a little treatiſe publiſhed by Dr *Owen* and entitled, *The nature, power, deceit, and prevalency of the remainders of indwelling ſin in believers*.—The author's pen is indeed a diſſecting knife, goes deep into his ſubject, and lays open this plague of the heart. Like a workman that need not be aſhamed, he demonſtrates his point from the unerring word of GOD, and the acknowledged experience of Chriſtians. Like a compaſſionate as well as able phyſician, he all along preſcribes the proper antidote; nay, he ſhews how the poiſon may be ſo over-ruled by divine grace, and ſo managed by the watchful patient, as to become medicinal, ſalutary, and conducive to the moſt beneficial purpoſes.

the largeſt emanations and moſt honourable exerciſe of mercy. On man's part, it founds a title to pardon, to life, and every ſpiritual bleſſing.—This doctrine, eſpecially in ſuch a connection, begins to put on a *more recommending* appearance. My prejudices are really wearing away. I am almoſt a convert.

Aſpaſio overheard the cloſe of theſe reflections. Unwilling to interrupt his friend in ſo ſerious an inquiry, and deſirous to obſerve the iſſue of ſo intereſting a debate, he had hitherto concealed himſelf. But thinking this a favourable minute, he ſtepped forward, and ſaid,——

Aſp. Almoſt! and why not *altogether* a convert? What ſhould hinder my dear *Theron* from ſubmitting to ſo *rational* a ſcheme, with the moſt entire acquieſcence? What ſhould hinder him from embracing ſo *comfortable* a doctrine with the utmoſt complacency? Why ſhould he not ſubſcribe, both with hand and heart, that divine decree? *Their righteouſneſs is of me, ſaith the LORD* *.

Ther. If, by this doctrine, the claims of the law are anſwered,—if the perfections of GOD are glorified,—if the intereſts of morality are ſecured,—I muſt acknowledge, it will be *more worthy* of acceptance, than I could once have imagined.

Aſp. And if all theſe points are not gained, gained too in the moſt eminent manner, I ſolemnly declare, that I will never plead for imputed righteouſneſs more.

But the *claims* of the law are all anſwered.—For there is nothing in its ſacred injunctions, which *CHRIST* did not perform; and nothing in its awful threatenings, which *CHRIST* did not ſuſtain. He fulfilled all its precepts, by an unſpotted purity of heart, and the moſt perfect integrity of life. He exhauſted its whole curſe, when he hung upon the croſs, abandoned by his FATHER, and a bleeding victim for the ſins of his people.—This obedience brings higher honour to the

* Iſ. liv. 17.

the divine law, than it could have received from the uninterrupted duty of *Adam*, and all his posterity, in all their generations.

The *perfections* of GOD, which were dishonoured by our rebellion, are glorified.—He appears, by this method of justification, inconceivably rich in shewing mercy; yet steady, inflexibly steady, in executing vengeance. The *sceptre* of grace, and the *sword* of justice have each its due exercise, each its full scope. The holiness of the divine nature, and the dignity of the divine government, are not only maintained, but most magnificently displayed. Indeed, it is the peculiar excellence of this wonderful expedient, that it renders *all* the divine attributes supremely venerable, and supremely amiable.

Ther. But are the interests of *morality* secured? This is what I am strongly inclined to doubt. And, to say the truth, this is now my principal objection to your scheme.

Asp. I shall never blame my friend, for being vigilant and jealous over the interests of morality. If our doctrine had a malignant aspect on true morality, I would give my voice against it, and use all my endeavours to suppress it.—But it is formed with every tendency to awaken the *utmost dread* of sin, and affect us with the *warmest sense* of our CREATOR's love. And is not *that* the strongest barrier against the incroachments of vice? Is not *this* the sweetest inducement to the practice of virtue?

I am glad to find, that a jealousy for the interests of morality, is the chief obstacle in the way of your assent; because, I am persuaded, it is much of the same nature with those forbidding and mistaken apprehensions, which our ancestors entertained, concerning the *ocean*. They looked upon it as an unsurmountable obstruction to universal society. Whereas it is, in fact, the very *cement* of society? the only means of accomplishing a general intercourse; and the

great

great highway to all the nations of the earth. What is here affirmed, may, on some future occasion, be proved.—At present, let me desire you to imagine, rather may the blessed SPIRIT enable you to believe, that your sins *are expiated*, through the death of *JESUS CHRIST:* That a righteousness *is given* you, by virtue of which, you may have free and welcome access to GOD; the merit of which you may plead, for obtaining all the blessings of time and eternity.—Then let me ask, Will this *alienate* your affections from your almighty BENEFACTOR? Will this *irritate* evil concupiscence, or send you to carnal gratifications in quest of happiness? Quite the reverse. When this faith is wrought in your heart, nothing will be so powerful to produce holy love, and willing obedience; to exalt your desires, and enable you to overcome the world.

What says the apostle? *I through the law am dead to the law* *. Being made to understand its spirituality and perfection, I have no longer any hope of justification from my own conformity to its precepts.—Did this prompt him, did this embolden him, to neglect or violate his duty? Hear the sacred writer's own declaration. I am released from the rigour and bondage of the law; I am directed to *CHRIST* for righteousness and salvation; *that I may live unto GOD:* that my whole life may be devoted to HIS honour, who has brought me into a state so delightful, into a liberty so glorious.

Ther. This liberty, I am afraid, will be of very little service to the licentious and gay world.

Asp. I shall be in no pain even for the *gay world*, if once they cordially receive this grace, and are vitally influenced by this doctrine: which, far from dissolving the least obligation to obedience, or weakening any one principle of piety, adds to every other

* Gal. ii. 19.

motive, the endearing engagements of gratitude, and the winning perſuaſives of love.

Nay, I verily believe, that multitudes in the gay and licentious world, are held faſt in the *fatal* ſnare, by their ignorance of this ſweet, alluring, conſolatory truth. They find themſelves deeply obnoxious to divine juſtice, and feel themſelves ſtrongly bound with the chains of ſenſuality. They think, it is impoſſible to clear the enormous ſcore of their guilt; impoſſible to deliver themſelves from the confirmed dominion of ſin. Therefore, like *deſperate* debtors, they ſtifle every ſerious thought; leſt a conſciouſneſs of their long arrears, and a proſpect of the dreadful reckoning, ſhould *torment them before the time* *.

But if they were informed, that the infinitely-merciful SON of GOD has undertaken to redeem ſuch undone and helpleſs ſinners;—that he has thoroughly expiated the moſt horrid tranſgreſſions, and procured even for ungodly wretches, all the needful ſupplies of ſtrengthening grace;—that, inſtead of being prohibited, they are *invited* to partake, *freely* to partake, of theſe unſpeakable bleſſings;—were they acquainted with theſe glad tidings of the goſpel, ſurely they would burſt their chains, and ſpring to liberty. Theſe *truths*, if once revealed in their hearts, would, of all conſiderations, be moſt effectual to *make them free* †.

What ſhall I ſay more, to obtain my *Theron's* approbation? Shall I point out and plead the moſt illuſtrious precedents?—GOD the FATHER is well pleaſed with this righteouſneſs of our REDEEMER. He expreſſes his complacency by the moſt emphatical words: *Behold my ſervant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my ſoul delighteth* ‡. In *CHRIST* and his righteouſneſs, GOD is not only pleaſed, but *delighted*: his *very ſoul*, every perfection of the GODHEAD, with

* Matth. viii. 29.

† John viii. 32. ‡ Iſ. xlii. 1.

with ineffable satisfaction, rests and acquiesces in them —I said *ineffable;* for he has declared this, in a manner superior to all the energy of language, by raising our crucified SURETY from the dead, by exalting him to the heaven of heavens, and placing him at his own right hand in glory.

Our *LORD JESUS CHRIST* is well pleased. He esteems it his honour to shine forth as the everlasting righteousness of his people. It is the brightest jewel of his mediatorial crown. In this he *sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied:* accounting himself fully recompensed, for all the labours of his life, and all the sorrows of his death, when sinners are washed from their guilt in his blood, and presented faultless by his obedience.

The HOLY SPIRIT is equally pleased with this great transaction, and its noble effects. It is his peculiar office, and favourite employ, to *convince* the world of their SAVIOUR's righteousness: not only that his nature was spotlessly pure, and his conversation perfectly holy; but that from both results a righteousness, of infinite dignity, and everlasting efficacy; sufficient, throughout all ages sufficient, for the acceptance and salvation of the most unworthy creatures.

Since then this method of acceptance and salvation is excellent and glorious, in the eyes of the adorable TRINITY; since it magnifies the law, and yields the most exalted honour to its divine AUTHOR; —since it makes ample provision for the holiness of a *corrupt*, and the happiness of a *ruined* wold;—why should my friend any longer dislike it, oppose it, or treat it with a cold indifference? Surely, all these grand recommendations, are enough to over-rule any little objections, which may arise from the suspicions of timidity, or may be started by the artifices of sophistry,

Ther.

Ther. I know not how it is, *Aſpaſio;* but I cannot reconcile myſelf to this doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs, notwithſtanding all the pains you have taken to make me a convert.

Aſp. The diſappointment is mine, but the loſs is yours, *Theron.*—However, let me intreat you, not to reject my ſentiments abſolutely, nor to condemn them prematurely. Suppoſe it poſſible at leaſt, that they *may* be true; and weigh them in an even balance.—Learn wiſdom from your *Aſpaſio*'s folly, I was once exactly in your ſituation; ſaw things in your light, and through your medium.

Converſing, I well remember, with a devout but plain perſon, our diſcourſe happened to turn upon that ſolemn admonition; *If any man will come after ME, let him deny himſelf* *. I was haranguing upon the import and extent of the duty; ſhewing, that merely to forbear the infamous action, is little. We muſt deny admittance, deny entertainment at leaſt, to the evil *imagination;* and quench even the enkindling ſpark of irregular deſire.—When I had ſhot a random bolt, my honeſt friend replied, "There is another inſtance of ſelf-denial, to which this injunction extends, and which is of very great moment in the Chriſtian religion. I mean, the inſtance of renouncing our own ſtrength, and our own righteouſneſs; not leaning on *that* for holineſs; nor relying on *this* for juſtification."—I thought the old man, I muſt confeſs, little better than a ſuperſtitious dotard; and wondered at (what I then fancied) the motley mixture of piety and oddity in his notions. But now I diſcern ſenſe, ſolidity, and truth in his obſervations †.

Now

* Matth. xvi. 24.

† *Milton* thought the ſame, otherwiſe he would never have put thoſe words into the mouth of a *divine* ſpeaker.

Thy merit
Imputed ſhall abſolve them, who renounce

Their

Now I perceive, that we ourselves are often the dreamers, when we imagine others to be fast asleep.

Ther. I shall not forget your caution, and will endeavour to avoid the rock, on which my *Aspasio* struck; but happily, it seems, escaped shipwreck.—You may likewise assure yourself, that, upon a subject of exceeding great and eternal consequence, I shall not fail to use the most attentive and impartial consideration. An *indolent* supineness, or a *bigotted* obstinacy, in this great crisis of affairs, would be of all errors the most inexcusable, and must prove of all miscarriages the most fatal.

Asp. But still *you cannot reconcile yourself.*—And no wonder. For this way of salvation runs directly counter to the stream of corrupt nature. It puzzles our reason, and offends our pride. What? shall we, not work, but *believe unto righteousness* *? Shall we receive all *freely*, and reckon ourselves no better than *unprofitable* servants? This is a method, to which we should never submit; this is a proposal, which we should always spurn; were not our sentiments rectified, and our hearts new moulded, by sovereign grace.

Let me remind you of a little incident, which you must have read in the *Grecian* history. A certain stranger came, one day, to dine with some *Lacedæmonians*. They, you know, always sat down at a public table, and were content with the plainest food. The gentleman, accustomed to higher eating, could not forbear expressing his disgust at the *homely* provision.—Sir, said the cook, you don't make use of the *sauce*.—What do you mean? replied the guest.—You don't use hard exercise; nor habituate yourself to long abstinence; nor bring a sharpened appetite to the meal.—And you, my dear friend, I am apprehensive, have

Their own, both righteous and unrighteous, deeds;
And live in thee transplanted, and from thee
Receive new life. Book III. 290.

* Rom. x. 10.

have not the ſauce; have not the proper preparative for this ſalutary doctrine; which is indeed the bread of life, and the very marrow of the goſpel.

Ther. What preparative?

Aſp. A ſenſe of your great depravity, your extreme guilt, and your utterly-undone condition.—While *deſtitute* of theſe convictions, our ſouls will be like *the full ſtomach*, that *loaths* even *the honeycomb*.—So long as theſe convictions are *ſlight*, and *hover* only in the imagination; we ſhall be like *Gallio* * liſtleſs, indifferent,

* *Acts* xviii. 17. A late commentator, of diſtinguiſhed eminence, has attempted to vindicate *Gallio*'s conduct; and would repreſent it as an amiable inſtance of *prudence* and *moderation*.

According to my apprehenſion, this *Roman* governor acted a part both irreligious and unjuſt.—*Irreligious*, becauſe he refuſed to hear the apoſtle's defence; which was the moſt likely means of his converſion and ſalvation. As one great end, why providence permitted the preachers of the goſpel to be *brought before rulers and kings*, was, that ſuch an incident might ſerve εις μαρτυριον αυτοις, Matth. x. 18. *for a teſtimony* (not *againſt*, but) *to them*: that even the potentates of the earth, prejudiſed and ſupercilious as they were, might hereby have an opportunity of hearing the *Chriſtian* doctrine, and ſeeing its efficacy on the ſpirits of men.—*Unjuſt*, becauſe he permitted *Soſthenes*, then an innocent perſon, afterwards a diſciple of *CHRIST*, (1 Cor. i. 1.) to be ſo illegally treated, and outrageouſly abuſed, without interpoſing for his reſcue. Here was evidently a breach of the peace; a violation of the laws. Of *this* therefore the civil magiſtrate ought to have taken cogniſance: however he might fancy himſelf diſcharged from the obligation of attending to the goſpel, or protecting its preachers: however he might imagine himſelf authoriſed, to treat divine truths with contempt; and call *the ſtriving for the faith*, a wrangling about *words and names*.

Beſides, if the HOLY SPIRIT intended to fix a mark of *approbation*, rather than a brand of *infamy* upon the *proconſul*'s behaviour; I cannot but think, it would have been expreſſed in a manner, different from—ς ουδεν τουτων τω Γαλλιωνι εμελεν. Which, if it be the language of applauſe, requires ſome more than ordinary ſkill in criticiſm, to underſtand it aright. But, if it be the voice of cenſure, it is obvious and intelligible to every reader.

ferent, and *caring for none of these things*.—But when they are *deep*, and *penetrate* the heart, then the righteousness of a REDEEMER will be sweet, tasteful, and inviting; as myrrh and frankincense to the smell, as milk and honey to the palate, as gold and treasures to the ruined bankrupt.

Ther. What method would you advise me to use, in order to get these convictions impressed on my heart?

Asp. Endeavour to understand GOD's holy law. Consider, how pure, how extensive, how sublimely perfect it is.—Then judge of your spiritual state, not from the *flattering* suggestions of self-love, not from the *defective* examples of your fellow-creatures, but by this *unerring* standard of the sanctuary.—Above all, beseech the GOD and FATHER of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*, to send his enlightening SPIRIT into your soul. For indeed, without the enlightening influences of the SPIRIT, we may have the divine law in our hand; we may comprehend its grammatical meaning; yet be like blind *Bartimeus* under the meridian sun. It is the blessed SPIRIT alone, who can rend the veil of ignorance from our minds; and shew us, either "the wonderful things of GOD's "law," or the glorious mysteries of his gospel. In this sense, our polite poet * speaks a truth, as singularly important, as it is elegantly expressed:

He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day.

Will you give me leave to propose another expedient? which, I believe, may be considerably serviceable in this particular case; which, I am assured, will be greatly advantageous in many other respects.

Ther. Backward as I am to adopt your doctrine, I am no enemy to my own interest; therefore shall not only give you leave to propose, but give you thanks for communicating, so valuable an advice.

Asp. It is in reality, none of mine. It was long ago

* Mr *Pope*, in his charming poem styled *the Messiah*.

ago recommended by your old acquaintance *Horace* *. It conſiſts in *keeping a diary*.

Compile a ſecret hiſtory of your heart and conduct.—Take notice of the manner in which your *time* is ſpent, and of the ſtrain which runs through your *diſcourſe;* how often the former is loſt in trifles, how often the latter evaporates in vanity.—Attend to the *principle* from which your actions flow; whether from the ſteady habitual love of GOD, or from ſome rambling impulſe, and a cuſtomary propenſity to pleaſe yourſelf?—Minute down your ſins of *omiſſion;* how frequently you neglect to glorify your CREATOR, to edify your fellow-creatures, and to improve yourſelf in knowledge and holineſs.—Obſerve the frame of your ſpirit in *religious* duties. With what reluctance they are undertaken, and with what indevotion performed; with how many wanderings of thought, and how much dulneſs of deſire.—How often, in the common affairs of life, you feel the inordinate ſallies of paſſion, the workings of evil concupiſcence, or the intruſion of fooliſh imaginations.

Regiſter thoſe *ſecret* faults, to which none but your own conſcience is privy, and which none but the all-ſeeing eye diſcerns.—Often review theſe intereſting memoirs. Frequently contemplate yourſelf in this faithful mirror.—An artiſt, ſome time ago, took a *ſurvey* of your eſtate; drew the form, and meaſured the dimenſions, of each incloſure; pictured out every hedge, and ſcarce omitted a ſingle tree, which grew upon the premiſes.—Act thus with your will, your underſtanding, your affections. Theſe are your noble *internal demeſne;* of which none but yourſelf can be a competent ſurveyor.

Ther.

* *Ille velut fidis arcana ſodalibus olim*
Credebat libris: neque ſi male ceſſerat uſquam
Decurrens alio, neque ſi bene: quo fit, ut omnes
Votiva pateat veluti deſcripta tabella
Vita ſenis. HORAT. Sat

Ther. It is unreasonable and preposterous, I must acknowledge, to be minutely exact in meaner matters, and use no accuracy of inspection in the most momentous affairs: to have a correct draught of our lands, which are a *transient* inheritance; and no map of that *everlasting* possession, the soul.

Asp. Gratify me then, my dear *Theron*, in this particular. As I purpose to set out very early in the morning, I shall insist upon it, that you do not rise before your usual time, in order to compliment my departure. But I now make it my *last* wish, and my *parting* request, that you will, for some months at least, keep a diary.

You have wondered at my opinion, concerning the corruption of our nature, and the insufficiency of our righteousness. This may seem strange, this may appear shocking, to a mind *unacquainted* with itself. But, when you have searched your heart, by this probe; when you have felt the pulse of your soul, by self-examination; then you will be better able to judge of my sentiments, and enter into the reasons of my faith.

By this means we shall also discover the sins that most easily beset us; which most frequently elude our vigilance, and baffle our resolution. We shall learn, *how* to post our guard; *when* to exercise the strictest watch; and *where* to direct the artillery of prayer.—In a word, we shall learn, better than from ten thousand volumes, to KNOW OURSELVES: a knowledge, which was supposed, by the ancient philosophers, to descend from heaven *; and which, I believe, our *Christian* divines will allow, has a happy tendency to lead people thither: because, of all other preparatives, it best disposes them for that blessed REDEEMER, who is the way, the only way to those blissful mansions.

Now I have mentioned a *way*, let me suppose you travelling

* ——*E cœlo descendit, γνῶθι σεαυτον.* JUVEN.

travelling through an unknown country. You come to a place, where the road divides itſelf into two equally-inviting parts. You are at a loſs, which track to purſue. Whoſe direction will you chuſe to follow? that man's, who has paſſed through *neither* of them? that man's, who has paſſed through *one* of them only? or that man's, who has paſſed and repaſſed them *both?* —To wait for an anſwer, would be an affront to your judgment. Only let me obſerve, that the laſt is your *Aſpaſio*'s caſe. He has travelled long, and proceeded far, even in *your* path. All that circumſpection and aſſiduity, all that prayer and ſelf-denial, all that faſting and alms, and every other means of grace could do, in order to eſtabliſh a righteouſneſs of his own, has been done. But to no purpoſe.—He has alſo trod every ſtep in the way, which he recommends to his beloved friend. He has made the trial; can ſet his *Probatum eſt*, to whatever he adviſes; and may very truly ſay, with his divine MASTER, *We ſpeak that we do know* *, and teſtify that we have experienced.

Ther. I am ſorry to obſerve, that the night is coming on, and our converſation almoſt at an end. My regret is increaſed, by the conſideration of your intended journey.—Though buſineſs obliges you to *depart*; it will, I hope afford you leiſure to *write*. This will be ſome compenſation for the want of your company.

Yonder ſun is ſinking below the horizon, and juſt taking his leave of our earth. To retard the departing radiance, at leaſt to alleviate the approaching loſs, thoſe weſtern clouds catch the rays; and reflect them to our view, in a moſt amuſing diverſity of colours. By this means, we enjoy the great luminary in *his beams*, even when *his orb* is withdrawn from our ſight. —An epiſtolary correſpondence has ſomething of the ſame nature. Letters may be called the talk of abſent friends.

* John iii. 11.

friends. By this expedient, they communicate their thoughts, even tho' countries, kingdoms, or seas intercept their speech. You must, therefore, promise me this satisfaction; and let me converse with my *Aspasio* by the *pen*, when I can no longer have an intercourse with him in *person*.

Asp. You have anticipated me, *Theron*. Otherwise, what is now my promise, would have been my request.

I cannot but take notice of another particularity in that magnificent assemblage of clouds. How they varied their appearance, as the lamp of day changed its situation.—A little while ago, those curtains of the sky were streaked with orange, or tinged with amber. Presently, they borrowed the blush of the rose, or the softened red of the pink. Ere long, they glow with vermilion, or deepen into crimson. Soon succeeds the purple-tinctured robe of majesty; and as soon (thus transient is all sublunary grandeur!) gives place to the *sable veil* of evening, or the *gloomy pall* of night. —Such, I trust, will be the issue of my *Theron*'s present apprehensions. All his splendid ideas of human excellency and self-righteousness will become faint; will lose their imaginary lustre; till, at length, they fade away, and darken into absolute *self-abasement*.—Then the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS will be amiable, will be desirable, as the beauties of the dawn, breaking upon the shades of night.

THERON

THERON AND ASPASIO:

OR, A

SERIES

OF

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

I AM now at the ſeat of my worthy friend *Camillus;* where buſineſs and inclination will fix me for ſome weeks.—This evening we had a moſt pleaſing ramble. I have met with nothing ſo agreeable, ſince I left your houſe, and loſt your company.

The time was juſt arrived, and the ſcene was fully opened, which furniſhed our great poet with his fine deſcription;

Now

Now was the ſun in weſtern cadence low.
From noon; and gentle airs, due at their hour,
To fan the earth now wak'd, and uſher in
The evening cool.

At this juncture, *Camillus* invited me to take the air.—We walked, ſeveral times, along a cloſe ſhady alley, arched with the foliage of *filberts*. Here, hid from every eye, and the whole world withdrawn from our view, we ſeemed like *monks* ſtrolling in their cloyſters.—Turning ſhort at the end, we enter a parallel range of majeſtic and uniformly-ſpreading *walnut-trees*. This tranſition was ſomewhat like advancing, thro' a low porch, into the iſles of a magnificent *cathedral*. The broad leaf, and large trunk of thoſe lordly trees, —their very diffuſive ſpread, added to their prodigious height,—give them an air of uncommon dignity. It ſwells the imagination with vaſt ideas, and entertains us with a romantic kind of delight, to expatiate amidſt ſuch huge columns, and under ſuch ſuperb elevations, of living architecture.

Quitting our cathedral, we turn once again, and paſs into a grand colonnade of *oaks:* ſo regular in their ſituation, ſo ſimilar in their ſize, and ſo remarkably correſpondent in every circumſtance, that they looked like the *twins* of nature; not only belonging to the ſame family, but produced at the ſame birth. Thro' theſe lay a walk, ſtrait, ſpacious, and gracefully long; far exceeding the laſt in the extent of its area, though much inferior in the ſtatelineſs of its ceiling. It put me in mind of that divine benignity, which has allowed us *fix* days, for the proſecution of our own comparatively-low affairs; and ſet apart but *one* for the more immediate attendance on the ſublime exerciſes of devotion.

This walk was covered with the neateſt *gravel;* and not a weed to be ſeen, nor one ſpire of graſs, thro' the whole extended ſurface. It ſtole into a continual aſcent;

aſcent; yet ſo very gradually, that the riſe was ſcarce diſcernable, either by the ſearching eye, the toiling feet, or the panting breath.—At the extremity, a handſome *ſummerhouſe* ſhewed a flight of ſteps, and half a *Venetian* door. The reſt of the building was hid by the cluſtering branches.

As ſoon as we enter the apartment, *Camillus* throws open the left-hand ſaſh; and, with it, a moſt enlarged and amuſive *proſpect*.—The ſtructure appeared ſituate on the brow of a conſiderable eminence: whoſe ſides were partly confuſed and wild with broken rocks, partly ſhagged and perplexed with thorny ſhrubs. The ſpectator is agreeably ſurpriſed, to find himſelf accommodated with ſo *elegant* a manſion, on the ſummit of ſo *rude* and *ruinous* a ſpot.—But how greatly is his ſurpriſe and his ſatisfaction augmented, when he caſts his eye forward; and beholds the beautiful *meads*, which, from the foot of this ragged hill, ſtretch themſelves into a ſpace almoſt unmeaſurable!

Through the midſt of this extenſive vale, which was decked with the fineſt verdure, and repleniſhed with the richeſt herbage, a *river* rolled its copious flood; rolled in a thouſand ſerpentine *meanders*, as though it had loſt its way in the flowery labyrinth, or made repeated efforts of flowing back to its ſource. Till, at laſt, having wandered more than twice the length of the meadows; having held a mirror to the aſpiring poplars, and bending willows; having paid a welcome ſalute to ſeveral ornamented *villas*, and paſſed thro' the arches of two or three curiouſly-pendent bridges; it ſeemed to meet the ſky, and mingle with the horizon.

Oppoſite to the front-window, a *caſcade* fell from the adjacent ſtream. It flaſhed and foamed along the broad ſlope, indented with ſmall pits, and jagged with protuberant ſtones. The current, vexed and embarraſſed, ſeemed to *rave* at the intervening obſtacles; and forcing its rapid, indignant, ſonorous way, ſtruck the

the ear with a peal of liquid thunder. Theſe fretful waters,—let our *angry* paſſions obſerve the admonition, and follow the example,—ſoon were pacified; ſoon forgot to chide. Collected into a little rivulet, they ran off in calm and ſilent lapſe, till they loſt themſelves amongſt beds of oſier, and plantations of alder.

The river, widening as it flowed, was parted here and there by ſeveral little iſlands. Some tufted with *reeds*, and the reſort of ſwans. Some adorned with ſtately *porticoes*, and ſplendid *alcoves*, the graceful retreats of rural pleaſure. Some furniſhed with green embowering walks, fitted for ſtudious retirement and ſedate contemplation.—On either ſide of the charming valley, towns and villages lay thick and looked gay; adding ornament and variety to the ſcene, and receiving innumerable advantages from the paſſing wave.

The whole recalled to an attentive obſerver's mind, that amiable and auguſt ſpectacle, which the *Syrian* * ſoothſayer could not behold, without a rapture of delight:—*From the top of the rocks I ſee* the tribes of JEHOVAH, *and from the hills I behold* the habitations of his choſen people. *How godly are thy tents, O Jacob! and thy tabernacles, O Iſrael! As the valleys, are they ſpread forth; as gardens, by the river's ſide; as trees of exquiſite fragrance* †, *which the LORD hath planted; as cedars* of ſtateliеſt growth, *flouriſhing beſide the waters.*

We had but juſt looked about us, when a meſſenger came for *Camillus*. As he was called to ſettle ſome private

* Numb. xxiii. 7.

† *Numb.* xxiv. 5, 6. It is well known, that the word אהלים is uſed in the ſacred writings, to denote either a *delightful perfume*, Prov. vii. 17. or that *aromatic plant*, which produces it, *Cant.* iv. 14.—For which reaſon, I think it very juſtifiable, to render the expreſſion, *trees of exquiſite fragrance*; and am perſuaded, it will be far more intelligible to the generality of readers, than *trees of lign-aloes*,

private affairs, I chose to stay in this inviting retreat; and determined to make myself amends for the loss of *Camillus*'s company, by beginning a correspondence with my *Theron*.—We have pen, ink, and paper, in all our rural retirements; that, if any thing is started in discourse, or occurs in meditation, worthy to be remembered, it may immediately be committed to writing.

I could not but observe to my friend, that, fine as the prospect appeared, there was one decoration wanting; if some *grand deformity* may be called a decoration. The ridges of a bleak and barren mountain, or the skirts of a sun-burnt tawny heath, would give *additional liveliness* to the ornamented parts of the landscape, and make their beauties strike with double vigour.—This also, by shewing us, what wretched abodes and inhospitable quarters might have fallen to our share, would awaken in our hearts a more fervent gratitude to the supreme DISPOSER of things; who has cast *our* "lot in a fairer ground, and given "*us* a more goodly heritage."

So, a proper knowledge of the divine *law*,—of its sublime perfections, and rigorous sanction,—joined with a conviction of our own extreme deficiency, and manifold transgressions;—all this would endear the blessed *JESUS* to our affections, and powerfully recommend his righteousness to our desires.—The remainder of this epistle, therefore, shall turn upon some instances of duty, injoined in that sacred system. *By which* it may be highly useful to examine our conduct, and sift our hearts; *in which*, I believe, we have all fallen short, and are all become guilty; *from which*, we may learn the imperfection of our best services, and see the inexpressible need of a better righteousness than our own.

The knowledge of GOD is the foundation of all vital religion, and indeed is the consummation of human

man happineſs. It is not only matter of preſent duty, but the very eſſence of our future bliſs: *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou haſt ſent* *.—Yet, important and obligatory as it is, are we not very defective in this divine ſcience? Have we duly acquainted ourſelves with the marvellous excellencies of the LORD JEHOVAH? his uncontrollable power, and all-comprehending wiſdom; his unbounded goodneſs, and unwearied patience; his immaculate holineſs, and inflexible juſtice; his never-failing faithfulneſs, and inviolable veracity?—Have we, according to the direction of our *inſpired* tutor, purſued this ſacred ſtudy on our knees†; and ſought this moſt noble of all intellectual endowments, not merely from books, but principally at the throne of grace? Have we ſought it, like that ancient *Jewiſh* ſtudent, with an early application, and with inceſſant aſſiduity; even "from "the flower, till the grape was ripe ‡?"

Is that ſcanty ray of knowledge, which perhaps has forced itſelf through our original darkneſs, *operative* on our affections? Have we loved the LORD our GOD with all our heart §? This is the firſt and great commandment ‖.—Have we conſtantly entertained the moſt magnificent and honourable thoughts of his ſublime perfections? Is our eſteem for this immenſely-great and moſt bleſſed BEING, high, ſuperlative, matchleſs? ſomewhat like *that* expreſſed by the Pſalmiſt? *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee* ⸸.—Have we been affectionately concerned for his *glory*, and zealous to advance his holy religion? troubled, very ſenſibly troubled, when our MAKER's honour has been trampled in the duſt, by licentious tongues, or flagitious deeds?

Have we made it our ruling care, to approve the

* John vxii. 3. † Jam. i. 5.
‡ Eccluſ li. 15. ‖ Matth. xxii. 38. ⸸ Pſal. lxxiii. 25.

whole of our life, and the moſt ſecret tranſactions of our breaſt, to his all-ſeeing eye? reſolved, deliberately reſolved to ſacrifice, not only our darling luſts, but even our moſt valuable intereſts, whenever they ſtand in competition with the good pleaſure of his will?—In a word, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, with ſuch *vehement* and *inextinguiſhable* ardour, have we thirſted after—a brighter manifeſtation of his divine attributes,—ſome ſweeter aſſurances of his ſpecial love,—and an ever-increaſing conformity to his holy image?

Such was the temper of thoſe excellent men, who are characterized in the ſcriptures of truth, as children of the HIGHEST, and patterns for our imitation. This is their language; *The deſire of our ſoul is unto thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my ſoul have I deſired thee in the night; yea, with my ſpirit within me will I ſeek thee early* *.—Neither is ſuch warmth of love, and fervor of deſire, any needleſs or extravagant pitch of devotion; but a *reaſonable* ſervice, indiſpenſably due, from all intelligent creatures, to the great AUTHOR of their being;—in whom all poſſible perfections, with the utmoſt exaltation and dignity, reſide;—from whom all manner of bleſſings, in the moſt copious and never-failing communications, flow.

When we receive, from an abſent *friend*, rich and repeated preſents; caſks of generous wine, or jars of delicious

* *Iſ.* xxvi. 8, 9. We can hardly tell, which to admire moſt, the *beauty* of the deſcription, or the *piety* of the perſons. *I have deſired;* and not with inactive wiſhes, but ſuch as prompt to vigorous endeavours. *I will ſeek thee;* and *early*, with the moſt vigilant application and unwearied aſſiduity.—The emphaſis is very much increaſed, by the addition of thoſe lively words, *with my ſoul, yea with my ſpirit;* with the whole bent and ſway of my affections, and with the ſteady invariable determination of my judgment.—Thus *have I* deſired thee, even *in the night;* when both the purſuits and the thoughts of other people are ſunk and loſt in profound repoſe. Thus *will I* ſeek thee, with a zeal—*early* as the riſing,—*conſtant* as the returning ſun.

delicious fruit; we feel ourselves enkindled into a grateful affection. We honour, we love the person, who allows us such a distinguished place in his heart; and expresses his cordial regard, by such a series of active and tender benevolence.—The blessed GOD is a friend to us all, infinitely powerful, and equally munificent. We are the constant objects of his *more than* friendly, of his parental cares. Every passing moment is a messenger of his patience, and charged with some token of his bounty. For *our* sake, he has diffused blessings over all the face of the earth; and commanded every element to concur, in ministering to our accommodation. He has not only adapted his benefits to our several wants; but has given them a *diversification*, large as the scope of our wishes; and an *enrichment*, far beyond all that our fancy could conceive.—Profuse liberality! yet small and scanty, compared with his most adorable benignity in *CHRIST JESUS.*

What, if GOD, willing to manifest the superabundant riches of his kindness, had made bare the arm of his omnipotence; and struck a most miraculous road through the surges of the ocean, to afford us a safe passage!—If, to accommodate us in our travels, he had brought waters out of the flinty rock; and bid the ravens bring meat to our hands, bid the winds convey manna to our doors?—if, to furnish us with a commodious settlement, he had dethroned mighty kings, dispossessed populous nations, and made the walls of impregnable cities fall to the ground?—if, to further the dispatch of our business, or facilitate the conquest of our enemies, he had arrested the sun in his meridian career, and laid an embargo upon the moon, setting out on her nightly tour?—in short, if, to promote our welfare, he had suspended the powers, and controlled the laws of universal nature; had wrought *all* the miracles, exhibited in the land of *Egypt*, or recorded in the volumes

of

of inſpiration :—ſhould we not think ourſelves under the moſt inviolable engagements, to love the LORD our GOD, *who had done ſo great things for us;* to love him unfeignedly and ardently; to love him with a ſupreme affection, far above every other amiable object?—Yet we have greater, incomparably-greater obligations to our almighty BENEFACTOR. For (hear O heavens! wonder O earth! and let eternity dwell upon the ſtupendous truth!) *God ſpared not his SON,—his own SON,*—his tranſcendently-glorious and divinely-excellent SON,—*but delivered him up* to the deepeſt humiliation, and to the moſt accurſed death, *for us* men and our ſalvation.

O *Theron!* have we been impreſſed with *wonder*, at the contemplation of this goodneſs? Have our hearts glowed with *gratitude*, under a ſenſe of theſe mercies? Surely, no man need be convicted of any other crime, at the great tribunal, than inſenſibility of ſuch love, and ingratitude for ſuch favours. This, without the acceſſion of horrid impieties, is enough to leave him abſolutely inexcuſable. This is enough to prove him one of the moſt *diſingenuous* and *deteſtable* of creatures.

Have we exerciſed ourſelves in frequent *thankſgiving?* Many are the exhortations to this honourable duty. *Praiſe thy GOD, O Zion* * : *praiſe him for his mighty acts* † : —*praiſe him according to his excellent greatneſs* ‡. —Innumerable are the incitements to abound in this pleaſant

* Pſal. cxlvii. 12. † Pſal. cl. 2.

‡ Among theſe exhortations we may rank that beautiful and devout addreſs to GOD, יושב תהלות ישראל Pſal. xxii. 3. *Thou that inhabiteſt*—light inacceſſible, ſhall I ſay? the regions of immenſity, or the ages of eternity? No; but what is a more exalted character—*the praiſes of Iſrael*: finely ſignifying, that praiſe is a moſt acceptable ſacrifice, to which the divine MAJESTY attends with the greateſt delight:—Intimating alſo, that the exerciſe of praiſe ſhould not be an occaſional thing, like a *tranſient viſit* to a ſtranger's houſe; but a daily and almoſt unintermitted ſervice, like the *ſtated reſidence* of a perſon in his own habitation.

pleasant service. Every comfort has a voice, and cries in the ear of reason, *O! that men would therefore praise the LORD for his goodness.* Every deliverance enforces the address, and furnishes fresh materials for the heavenly employ.—The man after GOD's own heart declares, as an inviting example for our practice, *I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth* *: *yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my GOD* †.—Indeed, when we consider the inexhaustibly-rich bounty of GOD our CREATOR, and the inconceivably-tender mercy of GOD our REDEEMER, it is both strange and deplorable, that the love of GOD is not always prevailing in our hearts, and the language of praise ever flowing from our lips.

I will not suppose our character so irreligious, that we have neglected the daily worship of GOD, either in our closet, or in our family.—But have we prayed with that profound *reverential awe*, which is due to the HIGH and LOFTY ONE, *who inhabiteth eternity?*—Have we made our supplications with that *fervent importunity*, which may in some measure correspond with the extreme indigence of our state, and the invaluable worth of the blessings we crave!—Have our petitions been attended with that *steady affiance*, which may glorify the goodness, the power, the veracity of the LORD? may evidently declare, that he *is rich in mercy, to all that call upon him* ‡; that he *is the LORD JEHOVAH, in whom is everlasting strength* ‖; that he *is the GOD of truth, and faithful for ever* ‡. We call him FATHER: but have we trusted in him, with that unsuspecting, chearful, filial confidence, which a child reposes on the fidelity and indulgence of such an earthly relative? Have we not entertained, too often entertained, narrow, dishonourable, beggarly apprehensions, concerning the treasures of

* Psal. xxxiv. 1. † Psal. cxlvi. 2.
‡ Rom. x. 12. ‖ Is. xxvi. 4. ‡ Deut. xxxii. 4.

of his liberality, and the bowels of his pity? rating them even lower than our parents, our friends, or our own.

Have we been careful to carry the spirit of our prayers into our *ordinary* conversation; and waited at the door, as well as approached to the throne of grace!—Amidst the intervals of our solemn devotions, have we cultivated an *ejaculatory* intercourse with heaven? How highly would the ambitious courtier *prize*, and how frequently would he *use* a privy key, which should give him, at all hours, free admittance to his sovereign. This key of admittance, only to an infinitely more exalted POTENTATE, we all possess in the practice of mental aspirations to GOD.—It is certainly the noblest employ, and will be the richest improvement of our thoughts, to send them in such short embassies to the KING of kings; and to derive, by such occasional sallies * of faith, a renewed supply from the fountain

* We have, in scripture, very remarkable instances of the success which has attended *ejaculatory prayer*.—Observe *Nehemiah*: He stands before *Ahasuerus*, apprehensive of the monarch's displeasure, yet desirous to solicit him in behalf of *Jerusalem*. To be delivered from his fears, and to obtain his desires, what method does he use? the mean and servile arts of flattery? No; but the manly and devout expedient of prayer. *I prayed*, says the patriot, *to the GOD of heaven*.—We cannot suppose, that he fell on his knees, or spoke with his lips, while he continued in the royal presence. But he darted up his soul in *silent* supplication. Which supplication "pierced "the clouds;" reached the eternal throne; and returned not again till a blessing was sent: such as totally averted the wrath he dreaded; and procured favour and assistance, much larger than he expected, *Neh.* ii. 4.

When *David* heard, that *Ahithophel*, the ablest politician in his kingdom, was revolted to *Absalom*; sensible what a loss his affairs had sustained, and what an advantage the rebellious party had acquired, he betook himself to his GOD. He staid not for an opportunity of retirement, but instantly and upon the spot cried, *O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!*—A *short* address, but very *efficacious*. HE, who disappointeth

fountain of all good. How great a *loſs* then muſt it be to our ſpiritual intereſts, and how contemptuous a *diſregard* of the ever-preſent JEHOVAH, to omit entirely, or long to diſcontinue, this moſt beneficial practice of habitual adoration?—Can you, my dear *Theron*, acquit yourſelf on this article of inquiry? Has not every day of your life been a day of negligence in this reſpect? been a perpetual diſobedience to our SAVIOUR's injunction, *Men ought*, in this manner, *always to pray, and not to faint* *?

Have we ſanctified the *Sabbath?* Has the LORD's day, with all its ſolemn and ſacred offices, been our delight?—Have we remembered that diſtinguiſhed portion of our time, as *Jacob* remembered the delightful interview

diſappointeth the devices of the crafty; ſent a ſpirit of infatuation among the rebels; and inclined them to reject the advice of that judicious ſtateſman. Which falſe ſtep brought upon their horrid enterpriſe the ruin it deſerved; and chagrined the wretched traitor, even to rage, frenzy, and ſuicide, 2 *Sam.* xv. 31. xvii. 23.

Amyntor, at a memorable period of his life, was under great diſtreſs of conſcience, and haraſſed by violent temptations. He made his caſe known to an experienced friend; who ſaid, *Amyntor, you do not pray.*—Surpriſed at this, he replied; "I "pray, if ſuch a thing be poſſible, too much. I can hardly "tell, how many times in the day I bow my knee before GOD: "almoſt to the omiſſion of my other duties, and the neglect "of my neceſſary ſtudies."—"You miſtake my meaning, dear "*Amyntor.* I do not refer you to the ceremony of the *knee*, "but to the devotion of the *heart*; which neglects not *any* "buſineſs, but intermingles prayer with *all*; which, in every "place, looks unto the LORD; and, on every occaſion, lifts "up an indigent longing ſoul for the ſupply of his grace. "This," (added he, and ſpoke with a peculiar vehemence,) "*this* is the prayer, which all the devils in *hell* cannot with-"ſtand."—This, I would farther obſerve, is the prayer, which brings down ſomewhat of *heaven* into the heart; in which I would myſelf deſire to abound; and would earneſtly recommend to all my acquaintance, and all my readers.

* Luke xviii. 1.

interview at *Peniel?* Have we expected it, as merchants expect the arrival of a richly-laden veſſel? Have we improved it, as huſbandmen improve the ſhining hours of the harveſt?—Have we wholly laid aſide every earthly engagement; *not ſpeaking our own words* *, nor allowing ourſelves in any gratifications, that may interrupt our communion with the FATHER of ſpirits!—Has *one day in his courts been preferable to a thouſand* †, ſpent either in the works of our calling, or in the ſcenes of recreation?—Have the memorials of our REDEEMER's dying merits, and the ſeals of his unchangeable loving-kindneſs, been reliſhed as a feaſt, and prized as a portion?

Have we honoured GOD's holy *word?*—What greater mark of diſeſteem, than to deſpiſe a perſon's diſcourſe, and not to think his ſpeech worthy of our notice? eſpecially, when he addreſſes us with very great ſeriouſneſs, and with the utmoſt affection. In our Bible, the GOD of glory ſpeaks to his creatures; ſpeaks with the moſt perſuaſive energy, and with all the yearnings of parental tenderneſs. Have we liſtened to our CREATOR, with reverence and delight; and rejoiced with trembling at—*Thus ſaith the LORD?*

Have we ſearched the oracles of truth, not merely as *ſcholars*, but as *ſinners;* not from a ſpirit of curioſity, or with an air of formality, but with a ſolicitude and ardour, becoming perſons who inquire after the SAVIOUR of their loſt ſouls? Have we ſubmitted our inmoſt thoughts to their impartial ſcrutiny; to receive conviction of ſin from their awful remonſtrances, and to hear the ſentence of condemnation at their righteous bar?—Have we been willing to ſuffer the reproach of *conſcious baſeneſs*, while they have ripped up the diſguiſes of falſehood; laid open our ſecret iniquities; and brought all our evil ways to remembrance? Thus *Joſiah* acted. *His heart was tender, and he humbled himſelf before the LORD; he rent his cloaths, and wept*

* Iſ. lviii. 13. † Pſal. lxxxiv. 10.

wept before the LORD, when he heard the words of the book of the law *.

Have we hid the glad tidings of the gospel within our memories, within our hearts? Have we been diligent to suck this *honeycomb* † of grace by concomitant meditation, and subsequent prayer?—Have we valued the precious promises, as gentlemen of wealth value the writings of their private estates; or as infranchised bodies esteem the charter of their public privileges?—Have we, like the princely patriarch, longed for those words of *edification*, *exhortation*, *and comfort*, more than for our necessary food‡? and, like the royal prophet, prevented the night-watches, that we may be occupied in those statutes || and ordinances of heaven?

We have hitherto confined the examination to a few instances of the *affirmative* kind; how dreadfully will the dark account be swelled, if instead of love and obedience, there be hatred and opposition;—*hatred* of the name, glory, and worship of GOD;—*opposition* to his interest, kingdom, and service!

GOD is *infinite perfection;* worthy of all admiration; exalted above all praise. Yet do not our thoughts more frequently, or more naturally turn upon our own accomplishments, than upon the adorable and shining attributes of the ALMIGHTY? This is, in itself, the most shameful *dotage;* and, in GOD's sight, the most abominable *idolatry*. Yet let us observe what passes within, and we shall probably find, that as damps arise in the mines, or fogs in the fenny grounds, so naturally, and so copiously do these overweening reflections arise in our depraved minds.

GOD is an *everlasting King*. Have we not too often resisted his authority? Have we not, as far as in us lay, deposed the omnipotent SOVEREIGN, and exalted *self* into the throne? made self-will our law, and

* 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27. † Cant. v. 1. ‡ Job xxiii. 12.
|| Psal. cxix. 148.

ſelf-pleaſing our end? thus adding ſacrilege to rebellion?

GOD is tranſcendently *gracious* and *amiable*. Have we not turned our backs upon him, by forgetting his mercies? Nay, have we not ſpurned him from our affections, by being *lovers of pleaſure, more than lovers of GOD* *?—Awake, conſcience, bear thy impartial teſtimony; and I am perſuaded, the *Phariſee* in our breaſts, like the man unfurniſhed with the wedding-garment, muſt be ſtruck dumb; muſt be covered with confuſion.

Is our heart warm with *brotherly love?*—Good manners will put expreſſions of civility into our mouths; but has a power from on high implanted the royal law of charity in our breaſts? The character of a gentleman requires a deportment acceſſible, obliging, and courteous: has the ſpirit of *Chriſtianity* taught us to love, *not in word* or plauſible appearance only, *but in deed and in truth*†?—Do we love our neighbours, not merely on account of ſome relation they bear us, or ſome ſervices they have done us? but becauſe they are creatures of the bleſſed GOD; are the objects of his providential care; and capable at leaſt of being conformed to his image? Do we love them, becauſe we hope, that the *LORD JESUS CHRIST* has bought them with his blood; is willing to make them partakers of his SPIRIT, and members of his myſtical body?

Are we ſincerely concerned for their preſent welfare, and their eternal happineſs? Do we embrace all opportunities of promoting both the one and the other? embrace them with the *ſame* alacrity, and improve them with the ſame zeal, which actuate us in ſeeking *our own* felicity?—If they exceed us in all that is amiable, and all that is proſperous, do we contemplate their ſuperior excellence with a real complacency, and their more abundant ſucceſſes with a real ſatisfaction?

Do we diſlike to hear, and abhor to ſpread, defamatory

* 2 Tim. iii. 4. † 1 John iii. 18.

tory tales; even when our adversaries are the men whom they tend to blacken?—When rudely affronted, or causelessly abused, do we pity the offenders, for the *wrong* done to their own souls; rather than kindle into resentment, at the *indignity* offered to ourselves?—When greatly injured, are we slow to anger, and not easily provoked? Are we much more willing to be reconciled, than to foment displeasure, and prosecute revenge? In a word, do we *love our enemies; bless them that curse us; do good to them that hate us; and pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us* *?—Without this loving and lovely disposition, *we abide*, says the apostle, *in death*†; are destitute of spiritual, and have no title to eternal life.

Let me add,—Are all our graces, and all our works, *clothed with humility?* This should be the dress, in which they severally appear; as well as the bond of connection, which unites them all ‡.—Do we maintain a very low opinion of our own accomplishments, and *in honour prefer others to ourselves* ‖? habitually sensible, that we are less than the least of the divine mercies, and the very chiefest of sinners?

I might easily have branched out the preceding subjects, into a much greater variety of interrogatory articles. But I intend only to present you with a specimen. Your own meditations will enlarge the sketch, and supply what is defective. Only let me beg of you, my dear friend, to try your state by this touchstone; to

* *Matth.* v. 44. *What manner of love is this?* How disinterested! how extensive! how triumphant! Must not all the boasted *benevolence* of the philosopher and moralist, strike sail to this evangelical charity? Must not both moralist and philosopher acknowledge the necessity of a *divine* operation, thus to enlarge, exalt, and refine their social affections?

† 1 John iii. 14.

‡ 1 *Pet.* v. 5. The unusual word ἐγκομβώσασθε is supposed to have *both* these significations.

‖ Rom. xii. 10.

to prove your conduct by this ſtandard. And may the FATHER of lights give you an underſtanding, to diſcern the exact purity and ſublime perfection of his holy law?

Have you lived in the *uninterrupted* obſervance of all theſe duties; avoiding whatever is forbidden, and obeying whatever is commanded? Your outward behaviour, I know, has been free from notorious violations; but has your inward temper been preſerved from all ungodly motions, and from every irregular deſire? Is there no enmity in your heart to any of the precepts; no any backwardneſs, nor any failure in performing each and every injunction?

When you put theſe queſtions to yourſelf, remember, that if you fail in *one* point, or in *any* degree, you are guilty of all *. If your conformity be not *perſevering* as well as *perfect*, you incur the penalty, and are abandoned to the curſe. You ſtand charged, before the JUDGE of the world, with all the guilt of all your ſins, both original and actual: and there is not one circumſtance, nor one aggravation, of any of your iniquities, overlooked or forgotten,—UNLESS renouncing all your *perſonal* performances, you place your whole affiance on a SAVIOUR's atonement, and a SAVIOUR's righteouſneſs.—I think, you will not dare to put the iſſue of your everlaſting ſtate upon the former footing; which is not only hazardous, but muſt be inevitably ruinous. You will infinitely rather chuſe to acknowledge yourſelf a poor inſolvent; and plead the unſearchable riches of your REDEEMER's obedience.

To thoſe who believe, the law, tho' *ſtrick*, is not *terrible*. Becauſe, be its precepts of holineſs ever ſo extenſive, they have been moſt completely fulfilled by their glorious SURETY. Be its penal ſanctions ever ſo rigorous, they have been ſatisfied to the utmoſt, by their great MEDIATOR.—Believers, therefore,

* Jam. ii. 10. Gal. iii. 10.

therefore, may make their boaſt of their adorable SPONSOR. They may *ſit under his ſhadow with great delight* *. While the thunderings of mount *Sinai*, and all the terrors of the legal diſpenſation, tend only to increaſe and quicken the refreſhing ſenſe of their ſafety. Juſt as the poſſeſſor of a plentiful eſtate, in ſome peaceful and proſperous country, repoſes himſelf under the ſhade of his vine, or the ſhelter of his fig-tree; and, hearing of the *wars* which embroil, or the *plagues* which depopulate other nations, taſtes, with augmented reliſh, his own felicity.

Let me cloſe with the affectionate and emphatical wiſh of an inſpired epiſtolary writer: That *the LORD of peace may give* my dear Theron *peace—always by all means* †! *Then* I ſhall think my wiſhes are accompliſhing, and this bleſſing is at the door, when he ſees the *purity* of the divine law,—ſees the *depravity* of his own nature,—and the *impoſſibility* of being juſtified, without an intereſt in the great MEDIATOR's righteouſneſs: That righteouſneſs, which, as it is the only hope, and the conſtant joy, is therefore the darling theme, of

Your ever faithful

ASPASIO.

P. S. Shall I *abridge* the preceding letter, and contract the whole into thoſe two great commandments, which made the firſt awakening impreſſions on my own mind? *Thou ſhalt love the LORD thy GOD with* ALL *thy heart: Thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as* THYSELF.—Amazing! ſaid your *Aſpaſio*. Are *theſe* the commands of GOD? as obligatory, as the prohibition of adultery, or the obſervation of the Sabbath? Then has my whole life been a *continual act* of diſobedience. Not a day, no, nor an hour, in which I have performed my duty.—This conviction ſtruck me, as

* Cant. ii. 3. † 2 Theſſ. iii. 16.

as the hand-writing upon the wall ſtruck the preſumptuous monarch.—It purſued me, as *Saul* purſued the *Chriſtians*, not only to my own houſe, but even to diſtant cities;—nor ever gave up the great controverſy, till, under the influences of the SPIRIT, it brought me *weary* and *heavy laden to JESUS CHRIST*.

LETTER II.

THERON *to* ASPASIO.

Dear ASPASIO,

MORE than three weeks are elapſed, ſince you favoured me with your improving company. During which interval, I have frequently recollected the moſt material parts of our late diſcourſes. I have carefully conſidered, both the doctrines you advanced, and the anſwers you returned to my ſeveral objections. —I have often reviewed your valuable letter; have uſed it as a *touch-ſtone*, to examine my ſtate; and have, with great punctuality, obſerved your parting advice. —I have ſat, every evening, for a *picture* of my *mind;* and have endeavoured to take a true unflattering draught of all its diſtinguiſhing qualities. And, if the diary is a faithful mirror, if it does not aggravate the deformity of my features, I ſhall be abſolutely out of conceit with myſelf: I ſhall ever entertain the *meaneſt* opinion of my own, either moral or religious qualifications.

Where is that intenſe and ſupreme *love* of GOD, which his tranſcendent perfections challenge, and his ineffable goodneſs claims?—Where that firm and joyful *reliance* on *CHRIST JESUS*, in any degree proportioned to his infinite merits and inviolable promiſes?—Where that cordial and tender affection for my *fellow-chriſtians*, which is due to the ſervants of a divine

divine REDEEMER; the people, whom he ransomed by his agonies, and purchased with his very blood?—Where is the incense of holy contemplation and refined desire? where the flame of fervent devotion and ever-active zeal? such as become the *living temple* of GOD, in which his most immaculate and glorious SPIRIT vouchsafes to reside?—These fundamental graces, like the grand organs in the animal system, should impart health to the soul, and spread the beauty of holiness through all the conversation. But these, alas! far from beating with a *vigorous* and *uniform* pulse, hardly heave with life; only just struggle, now and then, with some faint, intermitted, uneven throes.

How seldom do my actions spring from gratitude to the everlasting BENEFACTOR, or aim at the glory of his superexcellent MAJESTY?—In addressing the KING immortal, invisible, how languid are my affections, and how wandering is my attention? how great my unbelief, and how little my reverential awe?—I receive innumerable mercies; but where are my returns of correspondent thankfulness? I am visited with many gracious chastisements; but without proper resignation, or due improvement.—Alas for my heartless devotions, my lifeless virtues, and the multitude of my *refined iniquities!*—Hid behind the mask of outward decency, and some customary forms of religion, I was altogether unacquainted with my spiritual state. I fancied myself *rich, and increased with goods, and to have need of nothing:* even while I was *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked**.

If I look back, and review the years of youth and manhood, what has been the tenor, what is the aspect of my life? More like a desolate and horrid wilderness, than a cultivated garden, or a fruitful vineyard.—In *youth*, what sordid gratifications of appetite! In *manhood*, what base compliances with a wicked world!

* Rev. iii. 17.

world! In *both*, what ſholes of evil inclinations have polluted my heart! what ſwarms of vain imaginations have debaſed my thoughts! what frothy and unprofitable words have dropt from my lips!—By all which, how have I diſobeyed, and how diſhonoured GOD! how have I denied, and how crucified the *LORD JESUS CHRIST!*—and yet ſuppoſed myſelf, all the while, to be *good enough!*

It is ſomething unaccountable, that a perſon of my inquiſitive diſpoſition ſhould, through the courſe of ſo many years, be ſuch an utter *ſtranger* to himſelf. I wonder at my own *prepoſteroas* folly!—To travel into foreign countries, and viſit the moſt renowned cities of *Europe;* yet never ſtep over the threſhold, nor look within the apartments of my own breaſt.—To carry on a correſpondence with my friends, even in the remoteſt nations; and never enter upon a conference, nor hold any intelligence with my own heart!—To inquire after news from the fleet, news from the army, news from the court; yet exerciſe neither curioſity nor care, with regard to the hope of heaven, and the concerns of eternity!—What egregious miſconduct is this! A moſt pernicious error, in the œconomy of religious life.

Sometimes I have caſt a tranſient glance on my *outward* behaviour; but never extended my ſearch to the delinquent, the traitor, the rebel *within*.—And even my outward behaviour has been ſurveyed, with as much erroneous partiality, as ſuperficial levity. It has been compared, not with that *exact* and *ſublime* ſtandard, the ſcriptures of truth; but, as in the caſe of the ſelf-deceiving *Phariſee*, with the unjuſt, extortionate, adulterous practices of ſome other people. From whence I moſt unwarrantably concluded, that, being not quite ſo abandoned as the moſt profligate creatures, my character muſt be good, and my condition ſafe.—But, thanks to your laſt friendly letter,

and

and the searching expedient it recommended, I am now in a different way of thinking.

It is strange to recollect, and indeed it is shameful to confess, the many *artifices* which I have used, to put a *cheat* upon myself. Sometimes I have fancied, that the divine law could never be so strict, as to condemn us inexorably, if we continue not in all its precepts.—Sometimes I have pleaded the infirmity of our nature, and endeavoured to make the works of darkness appear only as pitiable failings.—Sometimes I have taken refuge in the excellency of our church, and plumed myself with the borrowed feathers of a religious profession.—At other times, I have soothed my conscience to rest, by a punctuality of attendance on places, or a zealous attachment to forms. And all this, to seduce, cajole, and betray myself,—betray myself, first into a vain *conceit* of my own endowments; then into a contemptuous *disregard* of *CHRIST;* and at last into eternal *destruction*.—But now I see my guilt; I apprehend my danger; and feel my helpless condition.

Indeed, my *Aspasio*, I am now convinced, that the darkest colours, cannot be too dark for the portrait of my spiritual state. I see myself overspread with an habitual depravity, and cannot forbear crying out, with the abashed leper; *Unclean! unclean* *!—The sacred oracles in no wise misrepresent fallen man, when they describe him as *altogether become abominable* †. They are from under-rating human works, when they denominate them *filthy rags* ‡. *Rags* they are, if we

* Lev. xiii. 45. † Job xv. 16.

‡ *Is.* lxiv. 6. Does not *Theron* misapply this text? Can it be intended to discredit the qualifications of the *upright?* Is it not rather a brand set upon the works of the *wicked*; whose very "sacrifices are an abomination to the LORD?" Or, a rebuke given to the specious performances of the *hypocrite*; who is precise in the form, but destitute of the power of godliness?

we consider their great imperfection, *filthy* rags, if we advert to their manifold defilements.—And since the nature of GOD is so irreconcilably averse to all contamination; since the law of GOD requires such unspotted perfection; O! *who can stand before this holy LORD*

lineſs? Or, may it not refer to *ritual* observances; in contradistinction to moral duties, and spiritual accomplishments?

The disparaging character must not, I think, be confined to ritual observances; because it is expressly said, ALL *our righteousneſſes*, including every kind of religious duty.—Neither can it be appropriated to the *formal* hypocrite, much less to the *notoriously*-wicked; because, those very persons, who are the subject of this assertion, declare in the context, *LORD, we are thy people; thou art our FATHER; we shall be saved.*—So that it seems intended to *stain the pride of all* human *glory*.

Besides, the prophet speaks of *himself;* WE *all are as an unclean thing;* which, however strange or unreasonable it may seem, is the very same charge, to which he pleads guilty in another place; *Wo is me! I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips!* Not that he was defiled with any gross pollutions; nay, he was a saint of the most distinguished lustre; but *his eyes had seen the KING, the LORD of hoſts*. He was under the clear manifestations of a GOD, glorious in holiness, inflexible in justice, and infinite in all perfections.—Amidst these manifestations, the impurity of his heart and nature were not only apparent, but glaring; overwhelmed him with abashment, and, till *CHRIST* was applied in a type, (*Iſ.* vi. 7.), filled him with terror.

In *such* circumstances, and under *such* views, all our moral virtues and evangelical graces, all our exercises of devotion, and acts of charity, will appear both defective and polluted: by no means proportioned to the demands of the law, nor sufficient for our recommendation to the Supreme LAWGIVER; —no more than a few *tattered* rags, can claim the character, or perform the services, of a complete suit;—no more than a few *filthy* rags are fit to dress the bride for her nuptials, or the courtier for a birth-night.

But there *is* a righteousness—blessed be divine grace!—spotlessly pure and consummately excellent; a righteousness, which answers all that the CREATOR requires, and supplies all that the creature needs: to prove this momentous point, and to display this unspeakable gift, is the design of the following sheets.

LORD GOD *, in any accompliſhments of their own?

When I farther reflect, that I have only a very obſcure glimpſe of the divine purity, and am a mere novice in the knowledge of my own heart; how am I amazed at the lofty apprehenſions which I once formed, concerning the *dignity* of my nature, and the *integrity* of my conduct! All owing to ignorance, the groſſeſt ignorance of myſelf and the ſcriptures.—How do I ſhudder to think, that, in expecting juſtification from the law, I was reſting the welfare of my immortal ſoul, not on the foundation of a rock, but on the point of a dagger. I was going to the deciſive tribunal, flushed with the falſeſt hopes, and charged with a ſet of glittering ſins; going, like poor deluded *Uriah* †, not with any valid credentials, but with *the miniſtration of death* ‡ in my hand.

Though I cannot but acknowledge the arrogance of theſe pretenſions, yet loath, very loath is my pride, to renounce the pleaſing abſurdity. Self-love has ſearched, and ſearched again, for ſomething excellent. It would fain make a better appearance, and can hardly brook the humiliation of imploring all *ſub forma pauperis* ||. With what reluctance is a ſinner brought to confeſs himſelf ſinful in every duty, ſinful in every capacity! Strange perverſeneſs!—But the charge is undeniable. However unwilling, I muſt plead guilty. THOU ART WEIGHED IN THE BALANCES, AND FOUND WANTING †, is evidently written on all I *am*, all I *have*, all I *do*.—And if I am thus defective, even in my own eſtimation; if I am utterly condemned, at the bar of my own conſcience; *what then ſhall I do, when GOD riſeth up? and when He viſiteth, what ſhall I anſwer him* ††?

I now

* 1 Sam. vi. 20. † 2 Sam. xi. 14, 15. ‡ 2 Cor. iii. 9.
|| That is, under the character of *a poor deſtitute*, or as a beggar ſues for his alms.
† Dan. v. 27. †† Job xxxi. 14.

I now see the necessity of an imputed righteousness. Without some such object for my trust, I am undone. I long therefore to hear your *arguments* in its behalf. And I must declare to you, if it can be satisfactorily proved from the scriptures, it is the most comfortable doctrine in the world, and worthy of all acceptation.

A letter upon this subject, would be a singular favour, and, I hope, an equal blessing to

Your obliged, and affectionate,

THERON.

LETTER III.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

THough all your letters give me pleasure, none was ever so highly pleasing as your last. I look upon it with the same secret joy, as a compassionate physician observes some *very favourable* symptoms, in the crisis of a beloved patient's distemper.

What you ask, I shall, without any farther preface, attempt to execute. If my attempt proves satisfactory to your judgment, I am sure, it will be the most likely means of *healing* your conscience, and *calming* your fears.—When we perceive the odious depravity of our nature; when we discern the horrible iniquity of our lives; and are sensible of that tremendous wrath, and everlasting vengeance, which are due to such guilty creatures; *then* nothing can be found, that will speak effectual peace, nothing that will administer solid comfort, but only the vicarious sufferings and the imputed righteousness of *JESUS CHRIST*.

To this purpose speaks one of the wisest and best of spiritual guides; *Has sin abounded?* as undoubtedly it has,

has, in our heart, and our life; *grace has much more abounded*, in the obedience, and the merits of our REDEEMER.—Nay, *has sin reigned?* exerted its malignant power, in the most extensive and most destructive manner; rendering us subject *unto death*, both temporal and eternal? *Even so has grace reigned;* exerted its benign efficacy, and in a manner yet more triumphant; not only rescuing us from guilt and ruin, but restoring us to *everlasting life* and glory: and all this *thro'* the *righteousness*, the complete meritorious righteousness brought in *by JESUS CHRIST our LORD* *.

You inquire after the *proofs* of this imputed righteousness. From a multitude I shall select a few: sufficient, I hope, to make it appear,—that this is the declared doctrine of our *church*, and the avowed belief of her *most eminent* divines:—that it is copiously revealed thro' the whole SCRIPTURES; revealed in many express passages, and deducible from a variety of instructive similitudes.

Hear the language of our Common Prayer, in a very affecting and solemn address to the ALMIGHTY; "We do not presume to come to this thy table, "O merciful LORD, trusting in our own righteous"ness."—If we may not, if we dare not, rely on our own righteousness, when we approach the *eucharistic table;* much less may we depend upon it, when we are summoned to the *decisive tribunal.*—Should you ask, On what we are to depend? The exhortation to the communion furnishes an answer; "On the meri"torious death and passion of *CHRIST*, whereby "*alone* we obtain remission of sins, and are made par"takers of the kingdom of heaven."

The collect appointed for the festival of *Circumcision*, has this remarkable introduction; "Almighty "GOD, whose blessed SON was *obedient to the law for*

* Rom. v. 21.

for man." In what ſenſe, or with what propriety, can this be affirmed, unleſs *CHRIST*'s perfect obedience be referable to us, and accepted inſtead of ours? On any other interpretation, I ſhould think, he was obedient not for *man*, but for *himſelf*.

Should the artful critic give ſome other turn to theſe paſſages, it will avail him but little. Becauſe the church, her own *beſt* expoſitor, has explained the meaning of ſuch phraſes, and put the matter beyond all doubt. In her eleventh article ſhe ſays, "We are "accounted righteous before GOD only for the me- "rits of our LORD and SAVIOUR *JESUS* "*CHRIST*."—The doctrine relating to pardon of ſin, had been ſtated in a preceding article. This diſplays the method, whereby ſinners may appear righteous in the eye of GOD, and in the court of heaven; ſo as to recover the divine favour, and obtain a title to eternal bliſs.—This is done, not by any *native* righteouſneſs, not by any *acquired* righteouſneſs, but by an *imputed* righteouſneſs. Were we juſtified by either of the former methods, it would not have been ſaid, We are *accounted*, but we *are* righteous. They are ſo far from conſtituting our reconciling and juſtifying righteouſneſs, that they have no ſhare in it; contribute nothing towards it; are totally excluded from it. We are accounted righteous, and accepted as ſuch, ONLY (mark the the expreſſion) ONLY through the meritorious obedience, and propitiating blood of our great MEDIATOR.

The Homilies are, if it be poſſible, ſtill more explicit, and more cogent. In the Homily concerning the ſalvation of mankind, we read the following words: —"The apoſtle toucheth three things, which muſt "go together in our juſtification. On GOD's part, "his great mercy and grace. On *CHRIST*'s part, "the ſatisfaction of GOD's juſtice, or the price of "our redemption, by the offering of his body, and "ſhedding of his blood, with fulfilling of the law per- "fectly.

" fectly. On our part, true and lively faith in the " merits of *JESUS CHRIST*, which yet is not " ours, but by GOD's working in us."—You see, according to the judgment of our venerable reformers, not only the offering of *CHRIST*'s body, and shedding of *CHRIST*'s blood, but also his *perfect fulfilling* of the law, are the adequate price of our redemption. All these act conjointly, they sweetly harmonize, in the great and glorious work. To suppose their disunion, is a *doctrinal* mistake, somewhat like that *practical* error of the Papists, in severing the sacramental wine from the sacramental bread; administering to the laity the symbols of the slaughtered body, but with-holding the symbols of the streaming blood.

There are *other* clauses in the same Homily, which set the seal of the church to our sentiments. I shall content myself with transcribing one from the conclusion.—" *CHRIST*," says that form of sound words, " is the righteousness of all them that do truly " believe. He for them paid their ransom by his " death. He for them fulfilled the law in his life. " So that now, in HIM, and by HIM, every true " *Christian* man may be called a fulfiller of the law; " forasmuch as that which their infirmity lacked, " *CHRIST*'s righteousness hath supplied."—This authority is as clear, as the doctrine authorised is comfortable. May the former sway our judgment! may the latter chear our hearts!

The Homily on *CHRIST*'s nativity informs the reader, that the design of our LORD's incarnation was,—" to give light unto the world, and call sin- " ners to repentance; to *fulfil the law for us*, and be- " come the propitiation for our sins; to cast out the " prince of this world, and destroy the works of the " devil.—We have all broke the law, we are all unable to keep the law; therefore the blessed *JESUS* fulfilled the law,—fulfilled it, in *each* and *every* of its demands,—fulfilled it, in the *highest* degree of perfec-

tion,—and, what is of all conſiderations moſt delightful, fulfilled it *for us*. His obediente took the place of what we were obliged to perform, under the covenant of works; and is not only the meritorious, but alſo the conſtituent cauſe of our juſtification.

So that, if there be any worthineſs in our LORD's moſt holy nature; any merit in his exerciſe of the ſublimeſt virtues; completed by his ſubmiſſion to the moſt ignominious ſufferings, and tormenting death;—then, according to this ſtandard-ſyſtem of orthodox divinity, theſe are the *ground*, theſe are the *ſubſtance* of a ſinner's juſtification.—And, according to the dictates of the moſt unbiaſſed reaſon, they are the *beſt*, the *ſureſt* ground that can either be wiſhed or imagined.

Does it not, from the preceding quotations, appear, that the doctrine of juſtification through the imputed righteouſneſs of our REDEEMER, is far from being diſclaimed by the *eſtabliſhed church?*—I am ſorry, but conſtrained to own, that we rarely find any conſiderable ſtrictures of this great evangelical peculiarity, in our *modern* theological diſcourſes. Yet there have been preachers of the higheſt repute for learning, for judgment, and for piety, who profeſſedly maintained this grand truth of the goſpel.

The devout Biſhop *Beveridge*, in his *Private Thoughts*, has left upon record the following very remarkable acknowledgment; which, if it ſuited *his* ſtate of eminent holineſs, cannot be too humbling, my dear *Theron*, for your lips and for mine. "I do not "remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed, "in all my life-time, with that reverence, or heard "with that attention, or received the ſacrament with "that faith, or did any work with that pure heart, "and ſingle eye, as I ought to have done. Inſomuch "that I look upon all my righteouſneſs, but as filthy "rags; and it is in the robes only of the righteouſ-

"neſs

" nefs of the SON of GOD, that I dare appear be-
" fore the MAJESTY of heaven."

The fervent and affectionate Biſhop *Hopkins* * ſpeaks in perfect conſonance with his brother of *St Aſaph*, —" The law was given us, not that we ſhould ſeek " juſtification by the obſervance of it, but finding it " impoſſible to be juſtified by filfilling it, we ſhould " thereby be driven to *CHRIST*'s righteouſneſs ; " who hath both fulfilled it in himſelf, and ſatisfied " for our tranſgreſſing of it ; and therefore ſaith the " apoſtle, *The law was a ſchoolmaſter, to bring us unto " CHRIST ; that we might be juſtified by faith.* To " this end it was promulged, that ſeeing the ſtrictneſs " of its precepts, the rigour of its threatenings, and " withal being convinced of our impotence to fulfil " its commands, we might be urged by its terrors to " fly to *CHRIST*, and find that righteouſneſs in " him which may anſwer all the demands of the law."

Biſhop *Reynolds* †, ſtyled by his contemporaries, and not without reaſon, *A walking library*, bears his teſtimony in the following words :—" *CHRIST* as our " Surety paid our debt, underwent the curſe due to " our ſins, and bare them all in his own body on the " tree ; became ſubject to the law for us, and repreſen-" tatively in our ſtead fulfilled all the righteouſneſs " the law required, active and paſſive. For ſin being " once committed, there muſt be a double act to juſti-" fication ; the ſuffering of the curſe, and the fulfil-" ling of righteouſneſs anew. The one, a ſatisfaction " for the injury we have to GOD, as our JUDGE ; " the other, the performance of a ſervice which we " owe unto him as our MAKER."

To this illuſtrious triumvirate, let me join Biſhop

 Davenant ;

* See his ſermon on *John* vii. 10.

† See his treatiſe, entitled, *The Life of CHRIST*.—Which, as well as all his other works, abound with ſtriking ſentiments ; have much elegance of diction, a copious variety of learning, and a lively animating ſpirit of evangelical piety.

Davenant; who, for his great abilities, and unquestionable integrity, was appointed one of our religious plenipotentiaries, at the renowned synod of *Dort*. In his very valuable exposition of the epistle to the *Colossians*, he writes to this effect: "*Ye are complete in CHRIST*. "Ye are furnished, in that all-sufficient REDEEMER, "with whatever is requisite to everlasting salvation. "With *wisdom;* since it is the consummation of this "noble endowment, to know *CHRIST* and him "crucified. With *righteousness;* because he has per- "fectly satisfied the law *, and thoroughly expiated "our guilt. With *sanctification;* because his SPIRIT "dwelling in our hearts, mortifies our corrupt affec- "tions, and renews the soul after the image of its "CREATOR."

Let me bring up the *rear* with a testimony, which, for clearness, solidity, and a full representation of the evangelical doctrine, might very justly have claimed a place in the *van*. It is taken from an author, whom the general consent of our nation has distinguished with the title of *Judicious*. The judicious *Hooker*, in a treatise on justification, says,—"It is a childish cavil "our adversaries so greatly please themselves with, "exclaiming, that we tread all *Christian* virtues under "our feet; because we teach, That faith alone justifi- "eth.

* In this respect principally (says our author, enlarging upon the text) are believers *complete;* because though destitute of any righteousness, that may properly be called *their own*, *CHRIST* has graciously enriched them with *his*. *Vid.* DAVENANT *in epist. ad Coloss. cap* ii. *com.* 10.

Let me beg leave to intimate, that this exposition of the epistle to the *Colossians*,—for perspicuity of style, and accuracy of method,—for judgment in discerning, and fidelity in representing, the apostle's meaning,—for strength of argument in refuting errors, and felicity of invention in deducing practical doctrines, tending both to the establishment of faith, and the cultivation of holiness,—is, I think, inferior to no writing of the kind; and richly deserves to be *read*, to be *studied*, to be *imitated*, by our young divines.

" eth. Whereas, by this ſpeech, we never meant to " exclude either hope or charity from being always " joined as inſeparable mates with faith, in the man " that is juſtified; or works from being added, as " neceſſary duties, required of every juſtified man: " but to ſhew, that faith is the only hand, which put- " teth on *CHRIST* to juſtification; and *CHRIST* " the only garment, which being ſo put on, covereth " the ſhame of our defiled natures, hideth the imper- " fection of our works, and preſerveth us blameleſs " in the ſight of GOD: before whom, otherwiſe, " the weakneſs of our faith were cauſe ſufficient to " make us culpable, yea, to ſhut us out of the king- " dom of heaven, where nothing that is not abſolute " can enter."

You will allow the ſagacious Biſhop *Sanderſon* * to ſum up the evidence; or rather to make an important remark on the whole of the controverſy. That great light of the church, both in caſuiſtical and practical divinity, obſerves,—" The tidings of a REDEEMER " muſt be bleſſed and welcome news, to thoſe that " are ſenſible of their own poverty, and take it of " grace." Our eagle-eyed divine penetrates into the *true* cauſe of the prevailing averſeneſs to this evange- lical doctrine. It is founded on the *ſtate* of the *heart*, more than upon any force of argument. People are but little, if at all, ſenſible of their ſpiritual and mo- ral indigence; of the defects which depretiate, and the defilements which ſully, whatever they have, and what- ever they do. Nay, ſtrongly tinctured with pride, they would be themſelves the *Alpha*, and ſuffer the bleſſed *JESUS* to be no more than the *Omega*, in procu- ring their eternal ſalvation. Therefore they can hard- ly be reconciled to the humbling character of an *elee- moſynary;* one who lives wholly upon the alms of the goſpel, and is dependent upon grace for his all.

Whereas, was this grand obſtacle once removed; were

* See his ſermon upon *Iſ.* lii. 3.

were men *convinced* of *ſin*, of exceeding ſinfulneſs in their worſt eſtate, and of remaining ſinfulneſs in their beſt; they would ſoon be *convinced* of *righteouſneſs* *, of the abſolute neceſſity and ineſtimable worth of a REDEEMER's righteouſneſs. They would no longer diſpute againſt it, but cordially receive it; entirely rely on it; and adore the goodneſs, the tranſcendent and unutterable goodneſs of GOD, in providing it.

I think, in one of our conferences, I undertook to produce my vouchers from the ancient *fathers*. Let me now ſubjoin two or three atteſtations of this kind. —From *one* of which you will perceive, that thoſe early writers had a conſiderable degree of clearneſs upon the point. From the *other* you will ſee, that, far from rejecting the doctrine, they embrace it with delight and rapture. And if you will admit of the *laſt*, you cannot be ſtartled at any thing, which I ſhall advance upon the ſubject.—Let me only premiſe in general, that, if thoſe authors are not ſo copious and explicit, with regard to the imputation of *active* righteouſneſs; they abound in paſſages, which evince the *ſubſtitution* of *CHRIST* in our ſtead: Paſſages, which diſclaim all dependence on any duties of our own, and fix the hopes of a believer entirely upon the merits of his SAVIOUR. When this is the caſe, I am very little ſolicitous about any particular forms of expreſſion; and far from being angry, even tho' the words, which I think moſt ſignificant, are not retained.

Clemens,—an intimate acquaintance of St *Paul*'s, and whoſe *name was in the book of life* †,—in his truly-excellent epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, aſſures that people ‡: *We*

* John xvi. 8. † Phil. iv. 3.

‡ Ου δι' εαυτων δικαιουμεθα, ουδε δια της ημετερας σοφιας, η συνεσεως, η ευσεβειας, η εργων ων κατειργασαμεθα εν οσιοτητι καρδιας· αλλα δια της πιστεως, δι' ης παντας τους απ' αιωνος ο παντοκρατωρ Θεος εδικαιωσεν. 1 Epiſt. ad. Corinth. This quotation

We are not, in any reſpect or in any degree, *juſtified by ourſelves*, but wholly by *JESUS CHRIST: not by our own wiſdom or prudence*, which could never find out the way; *not by the piety of our hearts, or works of righteouſneſs performed in our lives*, which could never be ſufficient for the purpoſe; *but by faith:* the one invariable method, *by which the almighty SOVEREIGN has juſtified all* his people, *ever ſince the world began.*

Juſtin,—who was firſt a *Gentile* philoſopher, then an eminent *Chriſtian*, and at laſt a *martyr* for the truth, —ſpeaks more fully to the point *: *What elſe could cover our ſins, but the righteouſneſs of JESUS CHRIST? By what poſſible means could we, unrighteous and unholy creatures, be juſtified, but only by the* interpoſition of the *SON of GOD* in our behalf?—Having, in this clauſe, made a profeſſion of his faith, the good man, on the contemplation of ſuch a privilege, breaks out into a kind of holy tranſport, O SWEET AND DELIGHTFUL EXCHANGE! *A diſpenſation unſearchably wiſe and gracious! Benefits, quite unexpected, and rich beyond all our hopes! that the ſin of many ſhould be hid by one righteous PERSON; and that the righteouſneſs of ONE ſhould juſtify many tranſgreſſors.*

The following words are remarkably ſtrong, and the ſentiments peculiarly bold. But they come from the pen of the fineſt writer in eccleſiaſtical antiquity. They have the great name, and venerable character of St *Chryſoſtom*, for their recommendatory preface †.—*Fear*

tation is *explained*, as well as *tranſlated*. But that every reader may diſtinguiſh the text from the paraphraſe, the firſt is printed in *Italic*, the laſt in *Roman* characters.

* Τι αλλο τας αμαρτιας ημων εδυνηθη καλυψαι, η εκεινη δικαιοσυνη; Εν τινι διαπαντοσηται δυναιον τους ανομους ημας η ασεβεις, ειν τω υιω του Θεου; Ω ΤΗΣ ΤΑΥΤΕΙΑΣ ΚΑΤΑΛΛΑΓΗΣ, ω της ανεξιχνιαστου δημιουργιας, ω των απροσδοκητων δι ενος πολλους ανομους δικαιωσεν. Epiſt. ad Diogn.—Tho' *Du Pin* queſtions the authority of this epiſtle, he allows it to have been written by an ancient hand. Dr *Cave*, as capable a judge, thinks there is no reaſon to doubt, but it is the genuine work of *Juſtin*.

† Μη τοινυν ραθυμησης, ως τον νομον παραδεχομενον, ενταυθα τη πιστει προσηλθε· τολε γαρ

Fear not, says he, *on account of any of thy paſt tranſgreſſions of the law, when once thou haſt fled by faith to JESUS CHRIST. The moſt enormous and the moſt deſtructive violation of the law is, to be with-held, by the conſciouſneſs of any guilt whatever, from believing on CHRIST. When thou acteſt faith on him, thou haſt fulfilled, I might ſay, more than fulfilled the law. For thou haſt received a better righteouſneſs, than it could ever require: thou art poſſeſſed of a better obedience, than any creature could poſſibly pay.*

Two or three witneſſes of *diſtinguiſhed ability*, and *undoubted veracity*, are a ſufficient confirmation of any cauſe. For this reaſon, and to avoid a tireſome prolixity, I have ſet aſide a multitude of voices; which, from the writings of our own and foreign divines, are ready to pour their united evidence.—And leſt the buſineſs of quotation, tho' ſparingly managed, ſhould ſeem dry and tedious; I will relieve your wearineſs, and enliven the collection, by an extract from the prince of *Engliſh* poetry.—*Michael*, the prophetic archangel, mentioning the deſtructive conſequences of the fall; and aſſerting the GODHEAD of that glorious PERSON, who undertook to be the repairer of this deadly breach; adds,

Which HE, who comes thy SAVIOUR, ſhall ſecure,
Not by deſtroying Satan, but his works,
In thee and in thy ſeed. Nor can this be,
But by fulfilling (that which thou didſt want)
Obedience to the law of GOD, *impos'd*
On penalty of death; and ſuffering death,
The penalty to thy tranſgreſſion due;
And due to theirs, which out of thine will grow,
So ONLY *can high juſtice reſt appaid* *.

Here

αυλον παρεζωνιες, ουτε δι αυτου του Χριστου μη πιστευσης· ου γαρ πιστευσης αυλος, κακεινον ἐταπεινωσας· ὁ πολλω χαλεπωτερον· πολλω γαρ μειζονα δικαιοσυνην ελαβες. Homil. XVII. in X. ad Rom.

* MILTON, book XII. 393.

Here then is the expreſs determination of our *Homilies*,—ſupported by the authority of our *Articles*, eſtabliſhed by the concurrence of our *Liturgy*,—ſtill farther ratified by the unanimous atteſtation of ſeveral celebrated *Divines;* whoſe lives were the brighteſt ornament to our church, and whoſe writings are the moſt unexceptionable interpretation of her meaning.—As a capital, to crown and complete this grand column, ſupervenes the declaration of the ancient *Fathers*, thoſe who flouriſhed, and with the higheſt renown, in the firſt and pureſt ages of Chriſtianity.—So that, if great authorities carry any weight; if illuſtrious names challenge any regard; this tenet comes attended and dignified with very conſiderable *credentials*.

Yet I will venture to affirm, that all theſe, conſiderable as they appear, are the *leaſt* of thoſe teſtimonials, which recommend the doctrine to my *Theron's* acceptance, and which have gained it admittance into the heart of

His moſt affectionate

ASPASIO.

LETTER IV.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

THE family, in which I have the ſatisfaction to reſide, tho' remarkable for their genteel figure and ample fortune, are ſtill more amiably diſtinguiſhed by their *benevolence*, *hoſpitality*, and *charity*.—As they live at a diſtance from the market-town, the lady has converted one apartment of her houſe into a little diſpenſatory; and ſtocked it with ſome of the moſt common, the moſt needed, and moſt ſalutary

medicines: which, in cases of *ordinary* indisposition, she distributes to her indigent neighbours, with singular compassion, and with no small success.—This fine morning, *Emilia* has ordered some skilful hands into the fields, to cull their healing simples, and lay up a magazine of health for the afflicted poor. *Camillus* is withdrawn to receive his rents, and settle accounts with his tenants.

Suppose, we act in concert with these valuable persons. Suppose, we range the delightful fields of scripture, and form a collection, not of salutiferous herbs, but of inestimable texts; such as may be of sovereign efficacy, to *assuage* the anguish of a guilty conscience, and impart *saving health* to the distempered soul.—Suppose, we open the mines of divine inspiration, and enrich ourselves, not with the gold of *Ophir*, but with the *unsearchable treasures of CHRIST;* or with that perfect righteousness of our REDEEMER, which is incomparably more precious, than the revenues of a county, or the produce of *Peru*.

In pleading for imputed righteousness, we have already urged the authority of our established church, and the suffrage of her most eminent divines.—The opinion of excellent writers, which has been the result of much learning, great attention, and earnest prayer, is no contemptible evidence. Yet we must always reserve the *casting*-voice, for those infallible umpires, the prophets and apostles. *If we receive*, with a deferential regard, *the witness of men; the witness of GOD is greater* *, and challenges the most implicit submission.—Which remark naturally leads me to the intended subject of this epistle; or rather calls upon me to fulfil my late engagement, and shew, —that the above-mentioned doctrine is copiously revealed, thro' the whole process of the scriptures.

Let me detach a very significant portion from the epistle

* 1 John v. 9.

epiſtle to the *Romans;* which, though little inferior to a deciſive proof, is produced only as an introduction to others. *Now the righteouſneſs of GOD without the law is manifeſted, being witneſſed by the law and the prophets; even the righteouſneſs of GOD, which is by faith of JESUS CHRIST unto all, and upon all them that believe* *. *The righteouſneſs of GOD*, ſignifies that righteouſneſs, which the incarnate GOD wrought out in his own all-glorious perſon †. It is ſtyled the righteouſneſs of GOD, by way of ſuperlative pre-eminence; in oppoſition to any righteouſneſs of our own, and in contradiſtinction to the righteouſneſs of all creatures whatever.—This righteouſneſs is *without the law*. Its efficacy has no dependence on, its merit receives no addition from, any conformity of our practice to the divine law; being complete, abſolutely complete in itſelf, and altogether ſufficient to procure the reconciliation and acceptance of ſinners.—This righteouſneſs is *witneſſed by the law and the prophets;* receives an uniform atteſtation from the various writings of the Old Teſtament. To inveſtigate which atteſtation, to examine its pertinency, and weigh its ſufficiency, is our preſent pleaſing buſineſs. We may begin with that gracious declaration, made

* Rom. liii. 21. 22.

† This explication, or ſomething to the ſame purpoſe, has occurred already. But it is hoped, the candid reader will not condemn the repetition, as a *diſagreeable* and *jejune* tautology.—Becauſe it is ſo conſonant to the practice of our great apoſtle, who repeats the term, re-inculcates the doctrine, and hardly knows how to deſiſt from the favourite topic; like one, who was quite enamoured with the ſubject, who found muſic in the words, and whoſe happineſs was bound up in the bleſſing.—Becauſe it is conformable to another, and a greater example. The LORD JEHOVAH himſelf, within the compaſs of *one* chapter, once and again, yea, a third and a fourth time, ſtyles this wonderful obedience, MY RIGHTEOUSNESS. As tho' the GOD of infinite perfection *gloried* in it; thought himſelf moſt *eminently* magnified by it; and was jealous to have all the honour reſulting from it. See *Iſ.* li.

to the first transgressors: *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head* *; shall destroy the works of the devil, and retrieve whatever was lost by his malicious artifices †. How could this be effected, but by restoring that righteousness, which, for a while, our first parents possessed; which they ought always to have held fast; but from which they so soon and so unhappily swerved?—Take the position in the right sense, and *Christianity* is, if not entirely, yet very nearly *as old as the creation*. It was comprehended in this blessed promise, as the *stamina* of the largest plants are contained in the substance of their respective seeds: every subsequent revelation being no more, than a *gradual evolution* of this grand evangelical principle; acting like the vegetative powers of nature, which, in rearing an oak with all its spread of branches, only expand the tunicles, and fill up the vessels of the acorn. This doctrine seems to have been typically taught, by the remarkable manner of *clothing* our first parents.—All they could do for their own recovery, was like the patched and beggarly mantle of *fig-leaves*. This they relinquish, and GOD himself furnishes them with apparel ‡. Animals are slain, not for food, but *sacrifice;* and the naked criminals are arrayed with the skins of those slaughtered beasts. The victims figured the *expiation* of *CHRIST*'s death; the clothing typified the *imputation* of his righteousness.—In perfect conformity, perhaps with a reference, to the passage thus interpreted, the apostle just now expressed himself; *even the righteousness of GOD, which is* not only made over ‖ *to all* believers, as a rich portion; but put ‖ *upon all*, as a beautiful garment. Whereby alone

* Gen. iii. 15.

† In some such sense, I think, our first parents must understand the promise. Otherwise it could yield them no *effectual* relief, under the distressing sense of their own misery, and the dismal apprehension of their posterity's ruin.

‡ Gen. iii. 21.

‖ *Rom.* iii. 22. ΕΙΣ παντας, ΕΠΙ παντας τους πιστευοντας.

alone their moral deformity can be covered, and their everlasting confusion prevented.—*Milton*, it is certain, speaking of this memorable transaction, considers it in the same spiritual sense:

Nor HE their outward only with the skins
Of beasts, but inward nakedness (*much more*
Opprobrious!) with his robe of righteousness
Arraying, *cover'd from his FATHER's sight.*

In thy seed, says the great JEHOVAH to his servant *Abraham*, *shall all the nations of the earth be blessed**. That the seed here mentioned is *CHRIST*, the apostle † places beyond all doubt. Both scripture and reason declare, that *true blessedness* must necessarily include—the pardon of sins, and the favour of GOD, —the sanctification of our souls, and the inheritance of life eternal. None of which are to be acquired by any human performances; but all are to be sought, and all may be found, in the Root and Offspring of *Abraham*, *JESUS CHRIST*: who is therefore most pertinently styled, THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS‡: the *actual* desire of every enlightened nation; and the *implicit* desire of all nations whatever; because all, without any exception, covet, what is to be derived only from *JESUS CHRIST* the Righteous, *real* happiness.

The patriarchal age, and the legal œconomy, bore their testimony to this truth, by typical persons, emblematical miracles, and figurative usages. Indeed, the whole ceremonial service was a grand *series* of types representing *CHRIST* and his everlasting righteousness. In all which this was the *unanimous* though silent language; *Behold the LAMB of GOD, that*

* Gen. xxii. 18.

† See St *Paul's* comment upon this invaluable promise, *Gal.* iii. 8. *&c. This* commentator, we all allow, was guided by the SPIRIT, and knew the mind of GOD. According to his exposition of the text, it is pregnant with the doctrine of justification by faith, and contains an abridgment of the gospel.

‡ Hag. ii. 7.

that taketh away the sin of the world.—These I shall not stay to discuss, because proofs of a more explicit and positive nature wait for our consideration. Only I would just make a transient observation, relating to one very remarkable constitution in the *Jewish* ritual.

The high priest had, on the front of his mitre, a plate of pure gold, engraven with that venerable motto *, HOLINESS TO THE LORD; which was always to be on his fore-head, when he performed the solemn ministrations of the sanctuary; and for this important reason, that the people *might be accepted before the LORD*†. Did not this most clearly foreshew the immaculate holiness of our great HIGH PRIEST? and with equal clearness imply, that *his* holiness should procure acceptance for all his followers?

In the book of *Job*, we have several hints of this truth, and one passage very express to our purpose.—*Elihu* describes an unconverted person, under the chastising hand of Providence. *Whose life*, through the extremity of his disease, *drew near to the grave; and his soul*, through the multitude of his iniquities, was ready to become a prey *to the destroyers*. In this deplorable condition, *if there be* present *with him, the MESSENGER*‡ of the covenant of peace; *that* great *INTERPRETER*‡ of the divine counsels, who, for his superexcellent wisdom, is justly deemed *one*

* Exod. xxviii. 36, 37. † Exod. xxviii. 38.

‡‡ See *Job* xxxiii. 22. &c.—*CHRIST* is called מלאך *The angel of* the divine *presence*, Is. lxiii. 9. *The messenger of the covenant*, Mal. iii. 1.—He is also, in the most unlimited sense of the phrase, מליץ *The Interpreter* of the divine counsels: he, to whom the FATHER hath given the tongue of the learned, and by whom he makes known the otherwise unsearchable mysteries of the gospel.—Should any doubt remain concerning the propriety of applying this passage to our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*, the reader I hope, will give himself the pleasure of perusing the polite *Witsius, Oecon.* lib. IV. cap. iii. § xxxi. and Dr *Grey*'s valuable notes upon the place, in his *Liber Jobi*.

one among a thousand, or rather the chiefest among ten thousand: if he, by his enlightening SPIRIT, vouchsafe *to shew unto* the afflicted *man his* own perfect righteousness; that most meritorious *uprightness* on which alone a sinner may depend, both for temporal and eternal salvation: *then* the poor distressed creature, attentive to this instruction, and applying this righteousness, is made partaker of pardon. *GOD*, the sovereign LORD of life and death, *is gracious unto him; and saith*, in the greatness of his strength, as well as in the multitude of his mercies, *Deliver him from going down into the pit* of corruption, as a pledge of his deliverance from the pit of perdition. For *I have found a ransom*, sufficient to satisfy my justice. I have received an atonement, in behalf of this once obnoxious, now reconciled transgressor.

But why do I select *one* particular paragraph? It seems to be the main design of the *whole* book, to overthrow all pretensions of any justifying righteousness in man; that the wretched sinner, nay, that the greatest saint, stript of every personal plea, may rely only on the merits of a REDEEMER. This is the final issue of all those warm debates, which pass between the afflicted hero and his censorious friends. This is the grand result of *Elihu*'s calm reasoning, and of GOD almighty's awful interrogatories. The apparent *centre* this *, in which all the lines terminate; justly therefore to be considered, as the *principal* scope of the whole work.

I must not omit an excellent observation, which I find in some *critical and explanatory notes* † on the last words of *David*. The judicious author proving, that this song relates to *CHRIST;* that it displays the dignity of our REDEEMER, under the character of *The KING*, and *The JUST ONE*; adds as an explication of the last amiable and glorious title.—

" Our

* See *Job* xlii. 6.

† By Dr *Grey*. See 2 *Sam.* xxiii. 1. &c.

" Our *LORD JESUS CHRIST* is so called, " not so much for having fulfilled all righteousness, in " his own person, and performed an unsinning obe- " dience to the will of GOD, as because, by his " righteousness imputed to us, we also upon the terms * " of the gospel, are justified, or accounted righteous " before GOD."

I think we may evidently discern the same vein of evangelical doctrine, running through many of the *psalms*.—*He shall convert* † *my soul;* turn me, not only from sin and ignorance, but from every false confidence, and every deceitful refuge. *He shall bring me forth in paths of righteousness*, in those paths of imputed righteousness, which are always adorned with the trees of holiness; are always watered with the fountains of consolation; and always terminate in everlasting rest. Some, perhaps, may ask, Why I give this sense

* That is, *freely*; or, as the prophet speaks, *without money and without price.* For nothing is requisite, in order to a participation of *CHRIST*, and his benefits, but a conviction of our extreme need, and an unfeigned desire to receive them; receive them as gifts of pure grace, vouchsafed to the *most undeserving* creatures.—This point, which is so intimately connected with our comfort and hope, the reader may see more fully stated in *Dialogue* XV.

† *Psal.* xxiii. 3. I am sensible, the word שובב may signify to *refresh* or *restore*; may answer to the *Greek* phrase αναψυξις; and denote the comforts of the HOLY GHOST.—This verb may also bear the same signification with the participle επιστρεψας, in our LORD's exhortation to *Peter*, *when thou art converted.* Not describing the first grand revolution in the heart, by which a new determination is given to the judgment and a new bias to the affections; but expressing those subsequent operations of the Divine SPIRIT, by which we are recovered from our various relapses, and healed of our daily infirmities. And I question, whether there is any instance, in which we more frequently need these restoring aids, than in the case of adhering to our REDEEMER's righteousness. So prone are we to *forget our resting-place!* so liable to fall from our steadfastness in *CHRIST!*

ſenſe to the paſſage? Why may it not ſignify the paths of duty, and the way of *our own* obedience?—Becauſe ſuch effects are here mentioned, as never have reſulted, and never can reſult, from any duties of our own. Theſe are not *green paſtures*, but a parched and blaſted heath. Theſe are not *ſtill waters*, but a troubled and diſorderly * ſtream. Neither can theſe ſpeak peace, or adminiſter comfort, when we paſs thro' the valley and ſhadow of death. To yield theſe bleſſings, is the exalted office of *CHRIST*, and the ſole prerogative of *his* obedience.

Admitting, that this obedience is of ſovereign advantage, during the years of life, and in the hour of death; it may ſtill occur to the ſerious and inquiſitive mind, what will be our ſafeguard, after the great change? When the ſoul departs, and our place on earth knows us no more; when the body revives, and we ſhall all ſtand before the judgment-ſeat; what will *then* avail us?—The ſame righteouſneſs of our divine LORD. This, if I miſtake not, is diſplayed in the very next pſalm: which begins with a ſolicitous inquiry; ſubjoins a ſatisfactory anſwer; and cloſes with a moſt pertinent but rapturous apoſtrophe.—This is the inquiry, *Who ſhall aſcend into the hill of the LORD? or who ſhall riſe up in his holy place?*—This is the anſwer; *Even he that hath clean hands, and a pure heart* †. *He*

* *Blaſted, diſorderly*—Let not theſe words grate on the ear; or, if they grate on the ear, let them humble the heart. What were *Job*'s duties? Zealous and exemplary; practiſed from his very youth: and neither excelled nor equalled by any perſon on earth. Yet theſe, in point of juſtification, were not a whit better than *Aſpaſio* repreſents. Let us hear the laſt words of this matchleſs ſaint, *I abhor myſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes.* From this confeſſion we learn, that, with all his furniture of *perſonal* obedience, he had juſt enough to be aſhamed, confounded, undone.

† *Pſal.* xxiv. 4. *Who* hath clean hands and a pure heart; he only, whoſe *heart is ſprinkled from an evil conſcience*, by the precious blood of *CHRIST*; and who *lives by faith in the SON of GOD*, Heb. x. 22. Gal. ii. 20.

He shall receive * *the blessing* of plenary remission *from the LORD, and righteousness also from the GOD of his salvation:* even that perfect righteousness, which is not acquired by man, but bestowed by JEHOVAH: which is not performed by the saint, but received by the sinner: which is the only solid basis, to support our hopes of happiness; the only valid plea, for an admission into the mansions of joy. Then follows the apostrophe. The prophet foresees the ascension of *CHRIST* and his saints into the kingdom of heaven. He sees his LORD marching at the head of the redeemed world, and conducting them into regions of honour and joy. Suitably to such a view, and in a most beautiful strain of poetry, he addresses himself to the heavenly portals; *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory,* with all the heirs of his grace and righteousness, *shall* make their triumphant entry; *shall enter in,* and go out no more.

Having shewn the powerful and extensive influence of our REDEEMER's righteousness; its efficacy, in this world to justify, in the other world to glorify; well may the sweet singer of *Israel* profess his supreme value for it, and entire dependence on it. *I will go forth in the strength of the LORD GOD, and will make mention of thy righteousness only* †. As tho' he had said, I will have recourse to no other righteousness, for the consolation of my soul. I will plead no other righteousness, for the recommendation of my person. I will fly to no other righteousness, for my final acceptance, and endless felicity.—This is that *raiment of needle-work and cloathing of wrought gold* ‡, in which the

* The words of the apostle, ο λαμβανων την δωρεαν της δικαιοσυνης. are almost a literal translation, are the very best explanation of the Psalmist's language, ונשא צדקה *Rom.* v. 17. *Psal.* xxiv. 5.

† *Psal.* lxxi. 16. There is, in the *Hebrew* original, and in the new translation, a very emphatical repetition; which adds weight to the sentiment, and demands a peculiar attention from the reader: *Thy righteousness, even thine only.*

‡ Psal. xlv. 13.

the King's daughter is introduced to HIM, "who "sitteth in the heavens over all." This is that garment *for glory and for beauty* *, which clothed our great HIGH-PRIEST; and descending to his very feet †, clothes and adorns the lowest members of his mystical body.

Recollecting all the foregoing particulars, justly and on the most rational ground, does our royal author declare, *Blessed are the people, that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted* ‡ — They are truly blessed, they alone are happy, who *know the joyful sound* of the gospel; not only receive it with their ears, but admit it into their very hearts; so as to partake of the sacred peace, and spiritual liberty, which it proclaims,—*They shall walk in the light of thy countenance;* they shall enjoy such communications of thy grace, and such manifestations of thy love, as will constitute the serenity and sunshine of their souls.—*In thy name, O LORD JESUS CHRIST*, in thy glorious person, and thy infinite merit, *shall they rejoice:* and not occasionally, but habitually; not barely at some distinguished intervals, but *all the day*. Their joy shall be as lasting, as it is substantial.—*And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted*, set above the tantalizing power of temporal things; placed beyond the slavish fear of the last enemy; and raised, when time shall be no more, to a state of celestial glory, and consummate bliss.

How thoroughly *evangelical* is this seraphic writer? He has joy, he has blessedness, and he looks for everlasting exaltation: yet not from his faith, his repentance, and his own sincere obedience. According to this,

I 2

* *Exod.* xxviii. 31. *Notabat*, says WITSIUS upon the place, *illud pallium justitiæ, quo indutus est, et suos induit CHRISTUS.*
† Rev. i. 13. ‡ Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16.

this, which is the modern scheme, faith, instead of receiving, would *supplant* the *LORD JESUS;* repentance, instead of being the gift of *CHRIST*, would become his *rival;* and sincere obedience, which is for the praise and glory of GOD, would *eclipse* and *impoverish* his grace.—But *David* adopts no such sentiments. *David* maintains no such doctrine. This is the invariable language of his heart, *All my springs* of hope, of trust, and consolation, O thou adored EMMANUEL, *are in thee* *.

This sense is the less precarious, I had almost said the more certain, as it exactly corresponds with the analogy of faith, and co-incides with the express declarations of other scriptures.—*Isaiah*, is styled the *Evangelist* of the *Jewish* church; because more frequently than any of the prophets he celebrates, and more copiously explains, this and other peculiarities of the gospel.—In the very first chapter, he preaches these glad tidings: *Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. Zion*, the gospel-church, composed of fallen creatures, sometime disobedient to their GOD, and inslaved to Satan, shall be *redeemed:* redeemed, not with corruptible things, silver and gold, but by severe *judgments* executed on their glorious HEAD, and gracious REPRESENTATIVE: and not by these only, but by *righteousness* also; by the perfect and most meritorious righteousness of the same divinely-excellent PERSON †.

Our sacred author bears his testimony, with warmer zeal and brighter evidence, as he proceeds in his incomparable discourses. *Surely, shall one say*, (or, as it may be rendered, *only*) *in the LORD have I righteousness and strength* ‡. Please to observe, *Theron;* it is

* Psal. lxxxvii. 7.

† *Hanc redemptionem docet* SPIRITUS SANCTUS *habere nos in obedientia et sanguine JESU CHRISTI.* Is. i. 27. VITRING. in loc.

‡ Is. xlv. 24.

is not said, in my own works, in my own repentance, no, nor in my own faith, but *in the LORD JESUS* have I righteousness:—righteousness for justification, and strength for sanctification: an imputed righteousness, to procure my acceptance; an imparted strength, to produce my holiness: the first constituting my title to the everlasting inheritance; the last forming my personal preparation for its enjoyment.—*Surely*, which expresses a firm persuasion, and an unshaken affiance. *Only*, which denotes an utter renunciation of all other confidence, and excludes every other ground of hope. —*Righteousnesses* *, the original is in the plural number: which seems to be used, not without an important design; to enlarge the significancy of the word, and make it correspond with the richness of the blessing: so that it may imply the fulness and supereminent excellency of this gift of grace; as comprehending whatever †, either of suffering or of obedience, is requisite to the justification of sinners.—Insomuch that *in the LORD JESUS CHRIST*, and his all-perfect righteousness, *the seed of Israel shall* not only *be justified*, but rejoice; *and* not only confide, but *glory* ‡.

What he had just now asserted, he exemplifies in his own, and in the person of every true believer. *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my GOD; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness* ‖.—True believers are compared, in one of our sacred

* צדקות parallel to which, both in construction and signification, is the phrase used by St *John*, Δικαιωματα, Rev. xix. 8. *The fine linen is the righteousnesses* (properly the righteousnesses) *of the saints.*

† *Vult dicere propheta, in JEHOVAH esse* ID PROPTER QUOD *peccator respiciens et credens*, a peccatis absolvi, et jure ad benedictionem cœlestem *donari queat ac debeat: esse illud JEHOVÆ proprium; ab ipso quærendum; quod extra ipsum non invenitur.* VITRING.

‡ Is xlv. 25. ‖ Is. lxi. 10.

sacred eclogues, to *a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot* *; to *horses*, than which no animal is more stately and graceful; to *Egyptian* horses, which were the best and completest then in the world; to those in *Pharaoh's* chariot, which, doubtless, were a choice set, selected from thousands, and finest where all were fine. Here, methinks, I see the comparison realized. *Christians*, endued with such a spirit as breathes in this animated text, are like a collection of those gallant and majestic steeds; not destined to low drudgery, but appointed to run in the royal chariot; all life; full of fire; champing the bit, and eager for the chace. Nothing can more beautifully describe a state of exultation and ardour, than the preceding similitude, or the following words,—*I will rejoice; I will greatly rejoice; my* very *soul*, and all that is within me, *shall be joyful in my GOD*. Wherefore? Because he *has clothed me*, undone sinner as I am, *with the garments of salvation*: because *he hath covered me*, defective as all my services are, *with the robe of righteousness*: A robe, which hides every sin, that in thought, word or deed, I have committed: a robe, which screens from the sword of justice, the curse of the law, and all the vengeance my iniquities have deserved: a robe which adorns and dignifies my soul; renders it fairer than the moon, clear as the sun, and meet for the inheritance of saints in light.

Having represented this righteousness, in a variety of grand and charming views,—the prophet farther characterizes it, as the *unalterable* and *never-failing* origin of our justification and happiness. This he displays by a train of images, bold and sublime to the last degree. *Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished*†.—Observe the vast dimensions, and the firm foundations, both of the upper and the lower world. How

* Cant. i. 9. † Is. li. 6.

How ſtrong, how ſtedfaſt, they all appear! Yet theſe, indiſſoluble as they may ſeem, ſhall periſh.—This majeſtic *globe*, on which mountains riſe and oceans roll, ſhall loſe its beautiful gloſs; and be laid aſide, like a decayed uſeleſs garment. Even that more majeſtic *concave*, in which ſtars are fixed, and planets revolve, ſhall be deprived of its very ſuperior luſtre; and vaniſh away, like the diſſolving ſmoke.—Whereas *my ſalvation*, with all the ſpiritual and heavenly bleſſings included in it, ſhall ſubſiſt and flouriſh for ever. *And my righteouſneſs*, which is the meritorious cauſe of all, ſhall be an immoveable foundation for repoſe and happineſs.—In ſhort, whether there be moral virtues, they ſhall be found wanting; whether there be Chriſtian graces, they ſhall prove ineffectual; but my conformity to the law, and my obedience unto death, neither need addition, nor admit of change; they are *all-ſufficient* in their merit, and in their virtue *everlaſting*.

When *day* ariſes on our benighted hemiſphere, it breaks and ſpreads by a gradual increaſe: forming, firſt, the grey twilight; next the bluſhing morn; then the ſhining light; till all is heightened into the blaze and glow of noon.—When *ſpring* reviſits our wintry clime, ſhe alſo advances by gentle degrees: firſt, ſwells the bud, and protrudes the gem; then, expands the leaf, and unfolds the bloſſom; the face of things is continually changing for the better; and nature ſhews herſelf, almoſt every hour, in ſome new and more engaging dreſs.—This leiſurely proceſs renders the *ſtrong* effulgence of the celeſtial orb more ſupportable; and the *lovely* expanſions of the vegetable creation, more obſervable.

So progreſſive and increaſing are the diſplays of *JESUS CHRIST*, exhibited in the ſcriptures: whoſe appearance is unſpeakably *more delightful* to the ſoul, than the emanations of orient light are to the eye, or the entertainments of the vernal ſeaſon to our other ſenſes.

ſenſes.—The gloom of fallen *Adam* was alleviated by a ray from this SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. *Abraham* and the patriarchs ſaw afar off the bleſſed *JESUS*, *as the morning ſpread upon the mountains* *, —The *Pſalmiſt* and the prophets beheld his nearer approaches, like the ſun upon the point of riſing.—To the apoſtles and evangeliſts he aroſe, in perfect luſtre, and complete beauty. The grace and the privileges, which *dawned* under other diſpenſations of religion, are *brought* even to meridian *light* by the goſpel.—This I mention, juſt to intimate, what you may expect from a following letter.

In the mean time, let us attend to the prophet *Daniel*. He records a meſſage from heaven, which is more clearly deſcriptive of this great evangelical bleſſing, than all the foregoing texts.—He had been under much diſtreſs, and in great perplexity; afflicted for his own, and his countrymen's ſins; anxious for the welfare of the choſen nation, and the proſperity of true religion. When an angel was diſpatched to the holy mourner, with this moſt chearing news; which, received by faith, is the richeſt balm to a wounded conſcience, and the only remedy for a guilty world: *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city; to finiſh the tranſgreſſion, and make an end of ſin; to make reconciliation for iniquity; and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs* †.—This prophecy relates to the MESSIAH. It tortels, that, in the fulneſs of time, he ſhould *finiſh the tranſgreſſion* ‡; reſtrain and ſuppreſs the power of corruption, by purifying to himſelf a peculiar people:—ſhould *make an end of ſin* ‖; by ſealing up or ſecreting its guilt, and totally aboliſhing its condemning power:—ſhould *make reconciliation for iniquity*, by ſuſtaining the vengeance due to ſinners, and fully ſatisfying the divine juſtice for all their offences:—ſhould not barely publiſh,

* Joel ii. 2. † Dan. ix. 24. ‡ בלא ‖ חתם

liſh, but accompliſh and *bring in a righteouſneſs* *; that it may be preſented both to GOD and man; to GOD, for the reparation of his violated law; to man, for the juſtification of his obnoxious perſon:—That this righteouſneſs ſhould be *everlaſting*; not ſuch as may be compared to the morning-cloud, which paſſeth away; or to the early dew, which is ſoon dried up; but ſuch as will outlaſt the hills, on which the latter ſhines; and outlaſt the ſkies, thro' which the former ſails: A righteouſneſs, whoſe merits extend to every period and every action of our lives; and when once made ours by imputation, remains and will remain our unalienable property.—To this all the ſaints, who, in ancient generations, pleaſed GOD, owe their acceptance; on this, all the children of men, who, in future ages, hope for his mercy, muſt rely; by this the whole aſſembly of the bleſſed will be invariably and eternally precious in his ſight.—Exalted character! Can it be applicable to any thing leſs, than the righteouſneſs of the incarnate GOD? Surely none can imagine, that *Daniel* would ſpeak in ſuch a *magnificent* ſtrain of any *human* righteouſneſs; ſince, in this very chapter, he profeſſedly depretiates himſelf, his fellow-ſaints, and all human performances whatever.

I forgot, in the proper place, to conſult the prophet *Jeremiah*. Let us now refer ourſelves to his determination. Celebrating the SAVIOUR of *Judah* and *Iſrael*, he ſays, *This is his name, whereby he ſhall be called, The LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS:* A determination, ſo clear, and ſatisfactory, as not to leave, one would almoſt conclude, any room for appeal.—Should the ſenſe of the paſſage be queſtioned,

* להביא I think, muſt ſignify more than to *publiſh* or *preach*. Had this been all that the angel was commiſſioned to declare, הגיד or אמר would probably have been uſed.—The word implies ſuch *a bringing in* (the original is the ſame) as when *Abel* brought his ſacrifice to the altar, for the divine acceptance; and *Eſau* brought his veniſon into the chamber, for his father's uſe, *Gen.* iv. 4. xxvii. 31.

ed, I think, there cannot be a more authentic explication, than the preceding extracts from *Isaiah* and *Daniel*. And having the unanimous attestation of two inspired penmen, we may venture to abide by such authority, even in opposition to some respectable names.—In the verse immediately foregoing, the *essential* holiness of the REDEEMER is displayed, under the character of the RIGHTEOUS BRANCH.—The sanctity, which he will *impart* to his subjects, is intimated by his *executing judgment and justice in the earth*.—In the clause we have quoted, his *imputed* righteousness is foretold and promised.—Thus the several sentences are distinct; the description of the SAVIOUR is complete; and he appears perfectly suited to the exigencies of a wretched world; in their worst estate, enslaved to Satan, and in their best, falling short of the glory of GOD.—This therefore I take to be the grand and extensive meaning of the prophet; not barely, the righteous LORD; not barely, the LORD who infuses righteousness into sinful souls; but the incarnate JEHOVAH *, whose *mediatorial* righteousness is, by an act of gracious imputation, *ours*,—to all the intents of justification and salvation; ours,—as much ours for these blessed purposes, as if we had wrought it out, each in his own person †.

Foreseeing

* *Jer.* xxiii. 5, 6. In these golden, infinitely-better than golden verses, are characterized the divine and the human natures of *CHRIST*, together with his mediatorial office. The *divine* nature; in that he enjoys the honours of the GODHEAD, and possesses the incommunicable name JEHOVAH.—The *human* nature; in that he was to be *raised up unto David*, and spring as a branch from his root.—The *mediatorial* office; in that he is the *righteousness* of his people, and the *salvation* of sinners.

† *Witsius*, speaking of the *mediatorial* righteousness, has written in *Latin*, what *Aspasio* expresses in *English*; *Per illam obedientiam tota multitudo illorum, qui ad ipsum pertinent*, justi constituuntur;

Foreſeeing and contemplating theſe bleſſings, the enraptured *Zechariah* cries out, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; ſhout, O daughter of Jeruſalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is juſt, and having ſalvation, lowly and riding upon an aſs, and upon a colt the foal of an aſs**.—He addreſſes himſelf to *Zion* and *Jeruſalem*, to the eccleſiaſtical and civil community. Perſons of all ranks and of every character, are exhorted to *rejoice;* to rejoice *greatly*; nay, to expreſs the joy of their heart, by loud *Hallelujahs*, and triumphant *exclamations*.—What is the cauſe of this general delight? what can fill both church and ſtate with ſuch high ſatisfaction? *Thy King cometh unto thee;* even that glorious KING, who rules in heaven, and rules in the heart; whoſe ſervice is freedom, and whoſe laws are love.—*He is juſt*; divinely righteous in his nature, and he cometh to fulfil all righteouſneſs in thy ſtead. *Having ſalvation*; hereby procuring ſalvation for his people; deliverance from ſin, from death and hell; from every evil thou deſerveſt, and from every miſery thou feareſt.—That none may be diſcouraged, and none deterred, from applying to this PRINCE of peace, he is, amidſt all the honours of his ſovereignty, *lowly;* does not abhor the baſeſt, will not deſpiſe the meaneſt; to the poor his goſpel is preached, and for the guilty his benefits are intended.—As an emblem, as a proof, of this moſt amiable and condeſcending goodneſs, *he will ride;* not like the conquerors of old, in a triumphal chariot, or on a richly-capariſoned ſteed; but upon the moſt mean and deſpicable of all animals, *an aſs;* nay, what is ſtill more deſpicable, on *a* rude undiſciplined *colt*, *the* wayward *foal of an aſs*†. And

conſtituuntur; *id eſt, cenſentur jus habere ad æternam vitam, non minus quam ſi quilibet eorum in propria perſona illam obedientiam præſtitiſſet.* Lib. II. cap. v.

* Zech. ix. 9.

† Becauſe ſome profane ſcoffers have preſumed to ridicule

And now,—since my *Theron* confesses himself to be *miserable, and poor, and naked:* since the eyes of his understanding are enlightened, to see the impurity of his

this very remarkable incident of our LORD's life, some interpreters of note have endeavoured to rescue it from their *abusive* attempts by observing,—"That the *eastern* asses are much "larger and more graceful than ours; that patriarchs and "judges thought it no disgrace to ride upon them."

This observation has, I fear, more of *false delicacy*, than of real truth, or Christian simplicity. In the *patriarchal* ages, I acknowledge, persons of high distinction thought it no dishonour, in their journeys and processions, to appear on this animal. But I very much question, whether the same fashion subsisted, or the same way of thinking prevailed, in the reign of *Tiberius Cæsar*. See *Jam.* iii. 3.—Nay, I am strongly inclined to suspect, that this plain primitive custom was superseded, even in the days of *Zechariah*. For long before this time I find, that *Solomon had four thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen:* and that *horses were brought to him out of Egypt, and divers other countries*, 1 Kings iv. 26. x. 28, 29. From this period, it is probable, none but the poor and inferior sort of people rode upon asses.—When *Isaiah* prophesied, *the land was full of horses*, Is. ii. 7. Under the *Persian* monarchy, when *Zechariah* flourished, horses were in still greater repute. Well therefore might the prophet say, with wonder and delight,—*lowly, and riding upon an ass!*

Was it a *mean* attitude? *exceedingly* mean? mean even to *contempt?* I make no scruple to grant it: nay, I make my boast of it! It is for the honour of my LORD's condescension; it is for the utter confusion of all worldly pomp and grandeur; and it is for the unspeakable comfort of my sinful soul.—Most charming humility! most endearing gentleness! HE, *who rideth upon the heavens as it were upon an horse, and maketh the clouds his chariot*, to atone for my pride, and to encourage my hope, disdained not, in the days of his flesh, to ride upon an ass.

They who would *dignify* this action, any otherwise than from its ever to-be-admired abasement, seem to have forgotten the stable and the manger. They who are *offended* at this circumstance, and ashamed to own their LORD in his deep humiliation, have but very imperfectly learned the apostle's lesson: *GOD forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of CHRIST JESUS my LORD.*

his heart; the imperfection of his righteousness; and that he is, in himself, a lost undone sinner,—what advice, cheering and salutary, shall I suggest? O! let him listen to an ADVISER, infinitely more able and compassionate; listen to HIM, who is the ANCIENT OF DAYS, and the WISDOM OF GOD; *I counsel thee*, says the blessed *JESUS*, *to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed* *.—*Gold!* what can this denote, but all those spiritual treasures, which are hid in *CHRIST?* which are, in measure, unsearchable; in value, inestimable; in duration, eternal.—*White raiment!* Surely this must signify the righteousness of our REDEEMER; which is all purity, and all perfection; which clothes the soul, as a most suitable and commodious garment; which covers every deformity and every sin; and presents the believer, free from shame, and free from blemish, before the throne of the MAJESTY in the heavens.

This, to use the delicate language, and amiable images of *Isaiah*,—*this* doctrine, embraced by a realizing faith, *is the* only pillow of *rest*, *wherewith ye may cause the weary* and heavy-laden soul *to find repose*; *and this is the* sovereign cordial, prepared by infinite mercy, for the *refreshment* of anxious and desponding transgressors. O! let us not be in the number of those proud *and* refractory creatures, who, tho' *they* infinitely needed, yet *would not hear* † the gracious news, nor receive the unspeakable benefit.—In this respect, and in this most eminently, is that other saying of the same sublime teacher, true; *The LORD of hosts shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, to the residue of his people* ‡. Shall we tear from our temples, or reject with disdain this unfading and heavenly ornament, in order to substitute a mean and tawdry chaplet of our own?

Let me add a pertinent passage from one of our celebrated

* Rev. iii. 18. † Is. xxviii. 12. ‡ Is. xxviii. 5.

lebrated dramatic writers; which, if proper in *his* ſenſe, will be incomparably more ſo, according to *our* manner of application.

> ——————*It were contemning,*
> *With impious ſelf-ſufficient arrogance,*
> *This bounty of our GOD, not to accept,*
> *With every mark of honour, ſuch a gift.*

I might proceed to urge this expoſtulation of the poet, as I might eaſily have multiplied my quotations from holy writ. But, ſtudious of brevity, I leave both, without farther enlargement, to your own meditation. Yet, more ſtudious of my friend's happineſs, I cannot conclude without wiſhing him an intereſt, a clear and eſtabliſhed intereſt, in this everlaſting righteouſneſs of *CHRIST*. For ſo, and ſo only, can he have *everlaſting conſolation and good hope thro' grace*. —I am, my dear *Theron*,

Inviolably yours,

ASPASIO.

P. S. Oppoſite to the room in which I write, is a moſt agreeable proſpect of the gardens and the fields; *theſe* covered with herbage, and loaded with corn; *thoſe* adorned with flowers, and abounding with eſculents: all appearing with ſo florid and ſo beautiful an aſpect, that they really ſeem, in conformity to the *Pſalmiſt*'s deſcription, even to *laugh and ſing*.—Let me juſt obſerve, that all theſe fine ſcenes, all theſe rich productions ſprung,—from what? From the *diſſolution* of the reſpective ſeeds. The ſeeds planted by the gardener, and the grain ſowed by the huſbandman, firſt periſhed in the ground, and then the copious increaſe aroſe.

Much in the ſame manner, a true faith in *CHRIST* and his righteouſneſs ariſes—from what? From the *ruins* of ſelf-ſufficiency, and the *death* of perſonal excellency. Let me therefore intreat my *Theron*, ſtill to take

take the diary for his counſellor; ſtill to keep an eye on the depravity of his nature, and the miſcarriages of his life. The more clearly we ſee, the more deeply we feel, our guilt and our miſery, the more highly ſhall we value the obedience of our bleſſed SURETY. —In ſuch a heart, faith will flouriſh as a roſe, and lift up its head like a cedar in *Lebanon*. To ſuch a ſoul, the great REDEEMER's righteouſneſs will be welcome, as waters to the thirſty ſoil, or as rivers in the ſandy deſert.

LETTER V.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

GIVE me leave to relate an uncommon accident, which happened a little while ago in this neighbourhood, and of which I myſelf was a ſpectator.—The day was the Sabbath; the place appropriated to divine worſhip, was the ſcene of this *remarkable* affair.

A boy came running into the church, breathleſs and trembling. He told, but in a low voice, thoſe who ſtood near, that a preſs-gang * was advancing to beſiege the doors, and arreſt the ſailors.—*An alarm* was immediately taken. The ſeamen, with much hurry, and no ſmall anxiety, began to ſhift for themſelves. The reſt of the congregation, perceiving an unuſual

* The reader, it is hoped, will excuſe whatever may appear *low*, or ſavour of the *plebeian*, in any of theſe circumſtances. If *Aſpaſio* had ſet himſelf to *invent* the deſcription of a panic, he would probably have formed it upon ſome more raiſed and dignified incident. But as this was a real *matter of fact*, which lately happened in one of our ſea-port towns: truth, even in a plain dreſs, may poſſibly be no leſs acceptable than fiction, tricked up with the moſt ſplendid embelliſhments.

unusual stir, were struck with surprise.—A whisper of inquiry ran from seat to seat; which increased, by degrees, into a confused murmur. No one could inform his neighbour; therefore every one was left to solve the appearance, from the suggestions of a *timorous imagination*. Some suspected the town was on fire. Some were apprehensive of an invasion from the *Spaniards*. Others looked up, and looked round, to see if the walls were not giving way, and the roof falling upon their heads.—In a few moments, the consternation became general. The men stood like statues, in silent amazement, and unavailing perplexity. The women shrieked aloud; fell into fits; sunk to the ground in a swoon. Nothing was seen, but *wild disorder;* nothing heard, but *tumultuous clamour*. —Drowned was the preacher's voice. Had he spoke in thunder, his message would scarce have been regarded. To have gone on with his work, amidst such a prodigious ferment, had been like arguing with a whirlwind, or talking to a tempest.

This brought to my mind that great *tremendous day*, when the heavens will pass away; when the earth will be dissolved; and all its inhabitants receive their final doom.—If, at such incidents of very inferior dread, our hearts are ready to fail; what unknown and inconceivable astonishment must seize the guilty conscience, when the hand of the ALMIGHTY shall open those unparalleled scenes of wonder, desolation, and horror!—when the trumpet shall sound,—the dead arise,—the world be in flames,—the JUDGE on the throne,—and all mankind at the bar!

The trumpet shall sound *, says the prophetic teacher. And how startling, how stupendous the summons! Nothing equal to it, nothing like it, was ever heard thro' all the regions of the universe, or all the revolutions of time.—When conflicting armies have discharged the bellowing artillery of war, or when victorious

* 1 Cor. xv. 52.

torious armies have ſhouted for joy of the conqueſt; the ſeas and ſhores have rung, the mountains and plains have echoed But the ſhout of the archangel, and the trump of GOD, will reſound from pole to pole; will pierce the centre, and ſhake the pillars of heaven.—Stronger, ſtranger ſtill! it will penetrate even the deepeſt receſſes of the tomb. It will pour its amazing thunder into all thoſe abodes of ſilence. The dead, the very dead, ſhall hear.

When the trumpet has ſounded, *the dead ſhall ariſe*.—In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the graves open, the monumental piles are cleft aſunder, and the nations under-ground ſtart into day. What an immenſe harveſt of men and women, ſpringing up from the caverns of the earth, and the depths of the ſea! Stand a while, my ſoul, and conſider the wonderful ſpectacle.—*Adam* formed in paradiſe, and the babe born but yeſterday, the earlieſt ages, and lateſt generations, meet upon the ſame level. *Jews* and *Gentiles*, *Greeks* and *Barbarians*, people of all climes and languages, unite in the promiſcuous throng. Here, thoſe vaſt armies, which, like ſwarms of locuſts, covered countries; which, with an irreſiſtible ſweep, over-run empires; here they all appear, and here they all are loſt; loſt like the ſmall drop of a bucket, when plunged into the unfathomable and boundleſs ocean. —O! the multitudes! the multitudes! which theſe eyes ſhall ſurvey, when GOD *calleth the heavens from above, and the earth, that he may judge his people*. What ſhame muſt ſluſh the guilty cheek! what anguiſh wound the polluted breaſt! to have all their filthy practices, and infamous tempers, expoſed before this innumerable croud of witneſſes!—Fly, my *Theron;* and fly, my ſoul; inſtantly let us fly, earneſtly let us fly, to the purifying blood of *JESUS*; that all our ſins may be blotted out; that we may be found *unblameable* and *unreproveable*, in the preſence of the aſſembled world; and, what is infinitely more

to be revered, in the ſight of the omnipotent GOD.

When the ſwarm iſſues, the hive will *burn*. There is no more need of this habitable globe. The elect have fought the good fight, and finiſhed their courſe. The wicked have been tried, and found incorrigible. The important drama is ended: every actor has performed his part: now therefore the ſcenes are taken down, and the ſtage is demoliſhed.—*Wo be to the earth, and to the works thereof!* Its ſtreams are turned into pitch, its duſt into brimſtone; and the breath of the ALMIGHTY, like a torrent of fire, enkindles the whole. See! ſee! how the conflagration rages,—ſpreads,—prevails over all! The foreſts are in a blaze, and the mountains are wrapt in flame. Cities, kingdoms, continents, ſink in the burning deluge. *London*, *Britain*, *Europe* are no more. Through all the receptacles of water, thro' all the tracts of land, thro' the whole extent of air, nothing is diſcernable, but one vaſt, prodigious, fiery ruin.—Where now are the *treaſures* of the covetous? where the *poſſeſſions* of the mighty? where the *delights* of the voluptuary?—How wiſe, how happy are they, whoſe portion is lodged in heavenly manſions! Their inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled; ſuch as the laſt fire cannot reach, nor the diſſolution of nature impair.

But ſee! the azure vault cleaves; the expanſe of heaven is rolled back like a ſcroll; and the JUDGE, the JUDGE appears! *He cometh*, cries a mighty ſeraph, the herald of his approach, *he cometh to judge the world in righteouſneſs, and miniſter true judgment unto the people!*—He cometh, not as formerly, in the habit of a ſervant, but clad with uncreated glory, and magnificently attended with the armies of heaven. Angels and archangels ſtand before him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand of thoſe celeſtial ſpirits miniſter unto him.—Behold him, ye faithful followers of the LAMB; and wonder and love. This is HE, who bore all your iniquities on the ignominious croſs,

croſs.—This is HE, who fulfilled all righteouſneſs for the juſtification of *your* perſons.—Behold him, ye deſpiſers of his grace; and wonder and periſh. This is HE, whoſe merciful overtures you have contemned, and on whoſe precious blood you have trampled.

The great *white throne* †, beyond deſcription auguſt and formidable, is erected. The KING of heaven, the LORD of glory, takes his ſeat on the dreadful tribunal. *Mercy*, on his right hand, diſplays the olive-branch of peace, and holds forth the crown of righteouſneſs. *Juſtice*, on his left, poiſes the impartial ſcale, and unſheaths the ſword of vengeance. While *Wiſdom* and *Holineſs*, brighter than ten thouſand ſuns, beam in his divine aſpect.—What are all the preceding events, to this new ſcene of dignity and awe? The peals of thunder, ſounding in the archangel's trumpet; the blaze of a burning world, and the ſtrong convulſions of expiring nature; the unnumbered myriads of human creatures, ſtarting into inſtantaneous exiſtence, and thronging the aſtoniſhed ſkies; all theſe ſeem *familiar* incidents, compared with the appearance of the incarnate JEHOVAH.—Amazement, more than amazement, is all around. Terror and glory unite in their extremes. From the ſight of his majeſtic eye, from the inſupportable ſplendors of his face, the earth itſelf and the very heavens *flee away* ‡.—How then? oh! how ſhall the ungodly *ſtand?* ſtand in his angry preſence, and draw near to this conſuming fire?

Yet draw near they muſt, and take their trial,—their deciſive trial at his righteous bar. Every action comes under examination. For each idle word they muſt give account. Not ſo much as a ſecret thought eſcapes this exact ſcrutiny.—How ſhall the criminals, the impenitent criminals, either conceal their guilt, or elude the ſentence? They have to do with a ſagacity too keen to be deceived, with a power too ſtrong

† Rev. xx. 11. ‡ Rev. xx. 11.

to be resisted, and (O! terrible, terrible consideration!) with a severity of most just displeasure, that will *never* relent, *never* be intreated more.—What ghastly despair lours on their pale looks! What racking agonies rend their distracted hearts! The bloody axe and the torturing wheel, are ease, are down, compared with their prodigious wo. And (O holy GOD! wonderful in thy doings! fearful in thy judgments!) even this prodigious wo is the *gentlest* of visitations, compared with that indignation and wrath, which are hanging over their guilty head,—which are even now falling on all the sons of rebellion,—which will plunge them deep in aggravated and endless destruction.

And is there a last day? and must there come
A sure, a fix'd, irrevocable doom?

Surely then, to use the words of a pious prelate *, it should be "the main care of our lives and deaths, "what shall give us peace and acceptation before the "dreadful tribunal of GOD. What but righteousness? What righteousness or whose? Ours or "*CHRIST*'s? Ours, in the inherent graces wrought "in us, in the holy works wrought by us? or "*CHRIST*'s, in his most perfect obedience and "meritorious satisfaction, wrought for us, and applied to us? The *Popish* faction is for the former. "We Protestants are for the latter. GOD is as direct on our side, as his word can make him; every "where blazoning the defects of our own righteousness, every where extolling the perfect obedience "of our REDEEMER's."

Behold! says the everlasting KING, *I lay in Zion, for a foundation, a stone; a tried stone; a precious corner-stone; a sure foundation:* HE THAT BELIEVETH, SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE †. As this text contains so noble a display of our SAVIOUR's consummate ability for his great work; as it is admirably calculated

* Bishop *Hall*. † Is. xxviii. 16.

ted to preſerve the mind from diſtreſſing fears, and to ſettle it in a ſteady tranquillity; you will give me leave to touch it curſorily with my pen; juſt as I ſhould deſcant upon it in converſation, was I now ſitting in one of your agreeable arbours, and enjoying your more agreeable company.

How beautiful the gradation! how lively the deſcription! and how very important the practical improvement! or, I might ſay, the inſcription which is engraven on this wonderful ſtone—*Behold!* intended to rouſe and fix our moſt attentive regard. The GOD of heaven ſpeaks. He ſpeaks, and every ſyllable is balm; every ſentence is rich with conſolation. If ever therefore we have ears to hear, let it be to this SPEAKER, and on this occaſion.

A ſtone. Every thing elſe is ſliding ſand; is yielding air; is a breaking bubble. Wealth will prove a vain ſhadow; honour an empty breath; pleaſure a deluſory dream; our own righteouſneſs a ſpider's web. If on theſe we rely, diſappointment muſt enſue, and ſhame be inevitable. Nothing but *CHRIST*, nothing but *CHRIST*, can ſtably ſupport our ſpiritual intereſts, and realize our expectations of true happineſs. And, bleſſed be the divine goodneſs! he is, for this purpoſe, not a ſtone only, but

A tried ſtone. Tried, in the days of his humanity, by all the vehemence of temptations, and all the weight of afflictions; yet, like gold from the furnace, rendered more ſhining and illuſtrious by the fiery ſcrutiny.—Tried, under the capacity of a SAVIOUR, by millions and millions of depraved, wretched, ruined creatures; who have always found him *perfectly able*, and as *perfectly willing*, to expiate the moſt enormous guilt,—to deliver from the moſt inveterate corruptions,—and ſave, to the very uttermoſt, all that come unto GOD through him.

A corner-ſtone: which not only ſuſtains, but unites the edifice; incorporating both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, believers

believers of various languages, and manifold denominations,—here in one harmonious bond of brotherly love,—hereafter in one common participation of eternal joy.

A precious ſtone. More precious than rubies; the pearl of great price; and the deſire of all nations. Precious, with regard to the divine dignity of his perſon, and the unequalled excellency of his mediatorial offices. In theſe, and in all reſpects, greater than *Jonah*,—wiſer than *Solomon*,—fairer than the children of men,—chiefeſt among ten thouſand,—and, to the awakened ſinner, or enlightened believer, *altogether lovely* *.

A ſure foundation † ſuch as no preſſure can ſhake: equal, more than equal to every weight; even to ſin, the heavieſt load in the world.—*The Rock of ages;* ſuch as never has failed, never will fail, thoſe humble penitents, who caſt their burden upon the LORD REDEEMER; who roll ‡ all their guilt, and fix ther

* Cant. v. 16. † *Fundamentum fundatiſſimum.*

‡ *Roll*—This is the exact ſenſe of the ſacred phraſe, גול Pſal. xxii. 8. xxxvii. 5. Prov. xvi. 3. I am not ignorant, that ſome people have preſumed to *cenſure*, and many have been *ſhy* of uſing, this bold and vigorous metaphor: which nevertheleſs appears to me, of all others the moſt juſt, the moſt ſignificant, and therefore the moſt truly beautiful.

A burden, that is manageable and comparatively light, we *caſt*, we *throw*. But that which is extremely ponderous and quite unwieldy, we move only by rolling. Accordingly, ſtones of an enormous ſize, are called by the oriental writers, *ſtones of rolling*,—Ezra v. 8.—Conſider the expreſſion in this view, and nothing can repreſent, with greater or with equal energy, that prodigious load, which, heavier than the ſand of the ſea, oppreſſes the guilty conſcience.—By ſubſtituting any other word, we enfeeble and dilute the ſenſe; we loſe the capital and ſtriking idea.

Vain man would be wiſe. Let him not then, for the credit of his ingenuity, adventure to correct the language of omniſcience. This, if any thing in nature, is

Periculoſe

their whole hopes, on this immoveable basis.—Or, as the words *may* be rendered, *a foundation *! a foundation!* There is a fine spirit of vehemency in the sentence, thus understood. It speaks the language of exultation, and expresses an important discovery. That which mankind infinitely want; that which multitudes seek, and find not; it is here! it is here! This, this is the foundation for their pardon, their peace, their eternal felicity.

Whosoever believeth, though pressed with adversities, or surrounded by dangers, *shall not make haste*†: but, free from tumultuous and perplexing thoughts, preserved from rash and precipitate steps, he shall possess his soul in patience; knowing the sufficiency of those merits,

Periculosæ plenum opus aleæ.

This will be sure to discover, not his fine taste, but his *grovelling* apprehension, and his *rampant* pride. To improve, with the painter's brush, the glowing colours of the rainbow; to heighten, by fuller's soap, the lustre of the new-fallen snows; would be a more modest attempt, and a much easier task, than to make an *index expurgatorius*, or a table of *errata*, when the SPIRIT of inspiration dictates. * מומר מומר

† *Shall not make haste*, לא יחיש This metaphorical expression, though it might be very intelligible to an *Hebrew*, is, to an *English* reader, like some fine picture placed in a *disadvantageous* light. We may possibly illustrate the prophet's meaning, and exemplify his assertion, if we compare the conduct of *Moses*, with that of the *Israelites*, on viewing the fatal catastrophe of *Dathan* and *Abiram*.—When the earth trembled under their feet; when the ground opened its horrid jaws; when the presumptuous sinners went down alive into the pit; when the tremendous chasm closed upon the screaming wretches; the children of *Israel*, it is written, *fled at the cry of them;* fled in wild and hasty confusion; *for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also.*—But *Moses*, who denounced the dreadful doom; *Moses*, who was sure of the divine protection; *Moses* made no such precipitate or disorderly *haste*. He stood calm and composed; saw the whole alarming transaction, without any uneasy emotions of fear, or any unnecessary attempts to escape. So that *his behaviour* seems to be a clear and apposite comment on *Isaiah*'s *phrase*. See *Numb.* xvi.

merits, and the fidelity of that grace, on which he has repoſed his confidence, ſhall quietly and without perturbation wait for an expected end.—And not only amidſt the perilous or diſaſtrous changes of life, but even in the day of everlaſting judgment, ſuch perſons ſhall *ſtand with boldneſs*.—They ſhall look up to the grand ARBITRATOR,—look round on all the ſolemnity of his appearance,—look forward to the unalterable ſentence,—and neither feel anxiety, nor fear damnation.

Such, in that day of terrors, ſhall be ſeen
To face the thunders with a godlike mien.
The planets drop: their thoughts are fix'd above:
The centre ſhakes; their hearts diſdain to move.

This portion of ſcripture, which, I hope, will both delight and edify my friend, recalls our attention to the ſubject of my preſent letter;—to thoſe propitiatory ſufferings, and that juſtifying righteouſneſs, which, imputed to ſinners, are the ground of their comfort, and the bulwark of their ſecurity.—And what ſay the writers of the *New Teſtament* upon this point? they, whoſe underſtandings were opened by the "WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR," to diſcern the meaning of the ancient oracles; who muſt therefore be the moſt competent judges of their true import, and our ſureſt guides in ſettling their ſenſe.—Do *they* patronize our interpretation of the prophets! do *they* ſet their ſeal to the authenticity of our doctrine?

St *Luke*, in his eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, has preſerved this weighty declaration of the apoſtles; *We believe, that through the grace of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, we ſhall be ſaved even as they* *. Here the thing is implied.—St *Peter*, in the introduction to one of his theological epiſtles, thus addreſſes his happy correſpondents: *To them that have obtained like*

* Acts xv. 11.

*like precious faith, in the righteouſneſs * of our GOD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.* Here the point is expreſsly aſſerted —With equal clearneſs is the doctrine delivered by *Matthew* the evangeliſt; *Seek ye firſt the kingdom of GOD and his righteouſneſs* †. What can the *kingdom of GOD* mean? An experience of the power, and an enjoyment of the privileges of the goſpel. What are we to underſtand by *his righteouſneſs?* Surely, the righteouſneſs which is worthy of this grand appellation, and peculiar to that bleſſed inſtitution.

Would we learn, what is the great and diſtinguiſhing peculiarity of the goſpel? St. *Paul* informs us; *Therein the righteouſneſs of GOD is revealed, from faith to faith.* As this text leads us into the epiſtle to the *Romans;*—as this epiſtle is, for the propriety of its method, as well as for the importance of its doctrine, ſingularly excellent,—it may not be amiſs to examine its ſtructure, and inquire into its deſign.

The apoſtle writes to a promiſcuous people; who had been converted, partly from *Judaiſm*, partly from *Gentiliſm*. His aim is, to ſtrike at the very root of their former errors reſpectively,—to turn them *wholly* to the ſuperabundant grace of GOD, and eſtabliſh them *ſolely* on the all-ſufficient merits of *CHRIST*.

The *Gentiles* were, for the moſt part, groſsly ignorant of GOD, and ſtupidly negligent of inviſible intereſts. If any among them had a ſenſe of religion, their virtues, they imagined, were meritorious of all that the DEITY could beſtow. If they fell into ſin; ſin, they ſuppoſed, might eaſily be obliterated by repentance,

* 2 *Pet.* i. 1. The phraſe is τησιν εν δικαιοσυνη. If we retain the common tranſlation, it proves another very momentous truth: that *the righteouſneſs of our GOD, even of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST* is the one *meritorious* procuring cauſe of *all* ſpiritual bleſſings; of faith, as well as of fruition; of grace, as well as of glory.

† Matth. vi. 33.

repentance, or compensated by a train of sacrifices *. A few of their judicious sages taught, that the most probable means of securing the divine favour, was a sincere reformation of life.

The *Jews*, it is well known, placed a mighty dependence on their affinity to *Abraham*, and the covenant made with their fathers; on their adherence to the letter of the moral law, and their scrupulous performance of ceremonial institutions:—*Gentiles* and *Jews* agreeing in this mistake, that they looked for the pardon of guilt, and the attainment of happiness, from some services done, or some qualities acquired by *themselves*.

Against these errors the zealous apostle draws his pen. He enters the lists like a true champion of *CHRIST*, in the most spirited and heroic manner imaginable. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of CHRIST:* for, however it may be deemed foolishness by the polite *Greeks*, or prove a stumbling-block to the carnal *Jews*, *it is the power of GOD unto* †*salvation;* it is the

* See WITSII *Animadversiones Irenicæ*, cap. vii.—A choice little piece of *polemical* divinity, perhaps the very best that is extant. In which the most important controversies are fairly stated, accurately discussed, and judiciously determined; with a perspicuity of sense, and a solidity of reasoning, exceeded by nothing, but the remarkable conciseness, and the still more remarkable candour of the sentiments.

The *Oeconomia Fœderum*, written by the same hand, is a body of divinity; in its method so well digested,—in its doctrines so truly evangelical,—and (what is not very usual with our systematic writers) in its language so refined and elegant, —in its manner so affectionate and animating, that I would venture to recommend it to every young student in divinity: I would not scruple to risk all my reputation upon the merits of this performance; and I cannot but lament it, as one of my greatest losses, that I was *no sooner* acquainted with this most excellent author.—All whose works have such a delicacy of composition, and such a sweet savour of holiness, that I know not any comparison more proper to represent their true character, than *the golden pot which had manna;* and was—outwardly, *bright* with burnished gold,—inwardly, *rich* with heavenly food.

† Rom. i. 16.

the grand inſtrument, which he has ordained for his bleſſed purpoſe, and which he will certainly crown with the deſired ſucceſs.—Whence has the goſpel this very peculiar power? Becauſe therein a *righteouſneſs is revealed*; a true and perfect righteouſneſs, which obliterates all guilt, and furniſhes a ſolid title to eternal life.—What righteouſneſs is this? The righteouſneſs not of man, but *of GOD*; which was promiſed by GOD in the ſcriptures; was introduced by GOD in the perſon of his SON; and, on account of its conſummate excellency, is both acceptable and available in his ſight.

This righteouſneſs is *from faith to faith* *; held forth, as it were, by a promiſing GOD, and apprehended by a believing ſoul: who, firſt, gives a firm *aſſent* to the goſpel; then, cordially *accepts* its bleſſings; from a conviction that the doctrine is true, paſſes to a perſuaſion that the privileges are his own.—When this is effected, a foundation is laid for all happineſs; a principle is wrought, to produce all holineſs.

But why was it requiſite, that ſuch a righteouſneſs ſhould be provided by GOD, and revealed in the goſpel?—Becauſe both *Gentile* and *Jew* neither poſſeſſed, nor could attain, any righteouſneſs of their own; and this righteouſneſs, though ſo abſolutely neceſſary for their fallen ſtate, was infinitely remote from all human apprehenſions. The latter aſſertion is ſelf-evident. The former is particularly demonſtrated.—Firſt, with regard to the *Gentiles*; the generality of whom were abandoned to the moſt ſcandalous exceſſes; and they who had eſcaped the groſſer pollutions, fell ſhort in the duties of natural religion.—Next, with regard to the *Jews*; many of whom lived in open violation of the external commandment; and not one of them acted up to the internal purity required by the *Moſaic* precepts.—From which premiſes, this concluſion is deduced; that each of them had tranſgreſſed

* Rom. i. 17.

even *their own* rule of action; that all of them were, on this account, utterly inexcusable; therefore *by the works of the law*, whether dictated by reason, or delivered by *Moses*, *no mortal can be justified* * in the sight of GOD.

Lest any should imagine, that righteousness may be obtained, if not by a conformity to the law of nature, or the law of *Moses*, yet by an observation of *evangelical* ordinances; he farther declares, that sinners are *justified freely*, without any regard to their own endowments; *through the redemption*, the complete redemption of *JESUS CHRIST* †: after such a manner, as may lay them low in humiliation, even while it exalts them to the kingdom of heaven: after such a manner, as may bring life and salvation to their souls, while all the glory reverts to GOD the FATHER, and his SON *JESUS CHRIST*.

In the prosecution of this very momentous subject, our sacred disputant removes an objection, which is as common, as it is plausible. *Do we make void the law through faith?* Do we render it a vain institution; such as never has been, never will be fulfilled?—*GOD forbid!* This were a flagrant dishonour to the divine LEGISLATOR and his holy commandments; such as we would abhor, rather than countenance.—On the contrary, *we establish the law* ‡; not only as we

* *Rom.* iii. 20. There seems to be a kind of *humbling* or *degrading* turn in the apostle's language πασα σαρξ, which may possibly be preserved in the translation, *no mortal*.—We may farther observe the very nice and exact manner of the sacred argumentation. Lest it should be said, and from the authority of *St. James*, *a man is justified by works*; our unerring writer tacitly allows, that *before men* this is practicable, *before men* this is proper; but not ενωπιον αυτου, not *before GOD*.

† Rom. iii. 24.

‡ *Rom.* iii. 31. An inconteſtable proof, that the apoſtle treats of the *moral* law.

we receive it for a *rule* of life, but as we expect no salvation without a proper, without a *perfect* conformity to its injunctions.—How can this be effected? By qualifying its sense, and softening it into an easier system? This were to *vacate* the law; to deprive it of its honours; and hinder it from attaining the due end, either of obedience or condemnation.—No; but we establish the law, by believing in that great MEDIATOR, who has obeyed its every precept; sustained its whole penalty; and satisfied all its requirements, in their utmost extent.

Farther to corroborate his scheme, he proves it from the renowned examples of *Abraham* and *David*.—The instance of *Abraham* is so clear, that it wants no comment. Any paraphrase would rather obscure, than illustrate it.—The other, derived from the testimony of the *Psalmist*, may admit the commentator's tool: yet not to hammer it into a new form, but only to clear away the rubbish; to rescue it from misrepresentation, and place it in a true light. *Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man, to whom GOD imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they, whose unrighteousnesses is forgiven, and whose sins are covered: Blessed is the man to whom the LORD will not impute sin* *.—Here is *imputation* asserted;—the imputation of *righteousness*;—of righteousness *without works*; without any respect to, or any co-operation from, any kind of human works. It is a blessing vouchsafed to the ungodly; not founded on a freedom from sin, but procuring a remission of its guilt.

Some, I know, have attempted to resolve all the force of this passage, into an argument for the *sameness* of pardon and justification. Whereas the apostle undertakes to prove, not that forgiveness and justification are identically the same, but that both are *absolutely free*. To maintain which position, he argues,

—"This

* Rom. iv. 6, 7.

—"This doctrine is as true, as it is comfortable. It "agrees with the experience, and has received the at- "testation of *David*. When he speaks of the blessed "and happy man, he describes him, not as an inno- "cent, but guilty person; not as having any claim to "the divine favour, on account of deserving per- "formances, or recommending properties; but as "owing all his acceptance to that sovereign grace, "which *forgives iniquities, and blots out sin*. Such is "the case with regard to that evangelical justification, "which we preach. *Even as;* it is, in the *manner* of "its *vouchsafement*, perfectly similar to the blessedness "celebrated by the *Psalmist*."—The apostle's eye is not so directly upon the nature of the privilege, as upon the *freeness* with which it is granted. Nor can any infer from the tenor of his reasoning, that to be forgiven, is the same as to be justified; only that both are acts of infinitely-rich mercy, designed for sinners, promised to sinners, bestowed on sinners; who have nothing, nothing of their own, either to boast, or to plead.

In the fifth chapter, from verse the twelfth to the end, the sacred penman points out the *cause*, and explains the *method* of justification. Of which this is the sum:—That *CHRIST*, in pursuance of the covenant of grace, fulfilled all righteousness in the stead of his people:—That this righteousness, being performed for them, is imputed to them:—That, by virtue of this gracious imputation, they are absolved from guilt, and entitled to bliss; as thoroughly absolved, and as fully entitled, as if in their own persons they had undergone the expiatory sufferings, and yielded the meritorious obedience.—Lest it should seem strange, in the opinion of a *Jew* or a *Gentile*, to hear of being justified by the righteousness of *another*, the wary apostle urges a parallel case, recorded in the *Jewish* revelation, but ratified by *universal* * experience;

* By the pains and death which *infants*, in every nation, endure:

ence; namely, our being condemned for the unrighteousness of another.—In this respect, he observes, *Adam* was a type of our *LORD*; or *a figure of him that was to come* *. The relations the same, but the effects happily reversed. *Adam* the head of his posterity; *CHRIST* the head of his people. *Adam*'s sin was imputed to all his natural descendants; *CHRIST*'s righteousness is imputed to all his spiritual offspring. *Adam*'s transgression brought death into the world, and all our wo; *CHRIST*'s obedience brings life and all our happiness †.—The whole closes with this very obvious and no less weighty inference; *Therefore, as, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life* ‡.

I do not recollect any other similitude, which the apostle so minutely sifts, and so copiously unfolds. He explains it; he applies it; he resumes it; he dwells upon it; and scarcely knows how to desist from it. I am sure you will not blame me, if I imitate the sacred author; revert to the subject; and quote another passage from the same paragraph.—*Much more shall they who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, reign in life by one, JESUS CHRIST* ‖.—Here, I am ready to think, the inspired writer puts a difference between the two grand blessings purchased by

endure: which are unquestionably punishments, and to which they are doomed by the righteous judgment of GOD.

* Rom. v. 14.

† *Quemadmodum peccatum Adami*, says *Bengelius*, *sine peccatis quæ postea commisimus, mortem attulit nobis; sic justitia CHRISTI, sine bonis operibus, quæ deinceps a nobis fiunt, vitam nobis conciliat.* That is, As the sin of *Adam*, without any concurrence of the sins, which we ourselves respectively commit, occasioned our ruin; so the righteousness of *CHRIST*, abstracted from all consideration of our personal obedience, procures our recovery.

‡ Rom. v. 18. ‖ Rom. v. 17.

by EMMANUEL, remiſſion and righteouſneſs *. For who are the perſons which *receive abundance of grace?* They, I apprehend, that, having ſinned much, have much forgiven.—Who are the perſons which *receive abundance of the gift of righteouſneſs?* They that, having in their own conduct wrought out none, which will bear the teſt of GOD's impartial ſcrutiny, have one placed to their account, which the all-ſeeing eye of heaven approves.—However, whether the diſtinction I have ventured to propoſe, be fanciful or ſubſtantial, of this I am perſuaded, that *the gift* of righteouſneſs † muſt ſignify a righteouſneſs, not originally their own, but another's; not what they themſelves have acquired, but what was fulfilled by their SURETY; and is, by an act of heavenly indulgence,

* *Non tantum peccata ſublata, ſed juſtitia præſtita.*

† I cannot but wonder at the aſſertion of a late writer, who roundly declares, "That there is not one word in this whole "chapter relating to the antecedent obedience of *CHRIST*'s "life, but expreſſing only his paſſive obedience."—Muſt then this group of expreſſions—δικαιοσυνη—δικαιωμα—υπακοη—be confined *barely* to the *ſufferings* of our LORD? To put ſuch a ſenſe upon the words of the apoſtle, is, according to my apprehenſion, not to *hear* his voice, but to *gag* his mouth; not to acquieſce in the ſacred oracles, but to make them ſpeak our own meaning.—*Beza*, who perhaps is inferior to no critic, with regard to a maſterly ſkill in the *Greek* language, thus explains δικαιωμα; *Juſtificationis eſt materia, nempe CHRISTI obedientia: cujus imputatio nos juſtos facit.*—*Mintert*, in his accurate and copious lexicon for the *Greek* Teſtament, gives this interpretation of δικαιοσυνη; *Opera CHRISTO a patre Præſcripta hoc nomine veniunt; nimirum omnia quæ ab ipſo præſtanda erant, tam ad legis divinæ impletionem, quam ad generis humani redemptionem: quæ nobis imputata, et per fidem accepta, faciunt ut coram DEO juſtificemur.*—And as for υπακοη, ſurely that cannot, without the utmoſt violence to its native ſignification, be *ſo* applied to the paſſive, as to *exclude* the active obedience. The *contrary* notion, if an artful diſputant ſhould eſpouſe it, might appear ſomewhat plauſible, but *this* has not the leaſt air of probability.

gence, conſigned over to them. Accordingly, it is repreſented, not as a *work*, but as a *gift;* and thoſe who are intereſted in it, are ſtyled not *workers*, but *receivers*.

I ſhould but faintly copy the apoſtolic example, if I did not once again avail myſelf of this important topic. Suffer me, therefore, to tranſcribe one more verſe from this admirable chapter. *As by the diſobedience of one man, many were made ſinners; ſo, by the obedience of one, ſhall many be made righteous* †:—The *diſobedience of one*, is the diſobedience of *Adam;* his actual tranſgreſſion of the divine law. Hereby *many were made ſinners*; ſinners, in ſuch a ſenſe, as to become obnoxious unto condemnation and death.—All this, I think, is, from the apoſtle's own words, indiſputable. And if we would preſerve the propriety of his antitheſis, or the force of his reaſoning, we muſt allow, that the *obedience of one* is the obedience of *CHRIST*; his actual and complete performance of the whole law. Hereby *many are made righteous*; righteous in ſuch a ſenſe, as to be releaſed from condemnation, and veſted with a title to life eternal.—How clear and eaſy is this meaning! how juſt and regular this argumentation! What ſubtilty of evaſion muſt be uſed, to give a different turn to the inſtructive text!

This is the moſt conſiſtent ſenſe in which I can underſtand *Rom.* viii. 5. *That the righteouſneſs of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the fleſh, but after the SPIRIT:* That the righteouſneſs required by the holy, but broken law, might be thoroughly accompliſhed; accompliſhed by our public REPRESENTATIVE, and in our human nature; ſo as to be deemed, in point of legal eſtimation, fulfilled *for* us and *by* us ‡. This, I ſay, is moſt conſiſtent with the

† Rom. v. 19.

‡ It is remarked by a judicious critic, and very valuable expoſitor, that the prepoſition "ſometimes ſignifies *by* or *for*; and is ſo tranſlated, *Matth.* v. 34. *Heb.* i. 1. See Dr *Guiſe*'s expoſition of the *New Teſtament*.

the tenor of St *Paul*'s arguing, and with the exact import of his language.—*With the tenor of his arguing:* for he undertakes to demonstrate the *impossibility* of our justification, by any personal conformity to the law. Whereas, if we could satisfy its penalty, and obey its precepts; or, in other words, fulfil its righteousness; this impossibility would cease.—*With the exact import of his language:* for the original phrase denotes, not a *sincere*, but a *complete* obedience; not what we are enabled to perform, but what the law has a right * to demand. Which, every one must acknowledge, is not fulfilled in any mere man, since the fall; but was fulfilled by *JESUS CHRIST*, for our good, and in our stead.—This interpretation preserves the sentences distinct, and makes a very natural introduction for the following clause; where the persons interested in this privilege, are described by their fruits, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the SPIRIT:* implying, that justification and sanctification are, like the *ever-corresponding* motion of our eyes, inseparable concomitants; and we vainly pretend to the former, if we continue destitute of the latter.

We have produced positive proofs of our doctrine.—We have heard an apostle declaring the assured happiness, and complete justification of *true believers*.—Let us now observe the same sagacious judge of men and things, discovering the danger of those *self-justiciaries*, who reject the REDEEMER's righteousness.

He is filled with the darkest apprehensions, concerning

* It may be worth our while to observe, that St *Paul*, when treating on this subject, uses three distinct words, all derived from the same original.—Δικαιωσις, which expresses *justification*; the accounting or declaring a person righteous.—Δικαιοσυνη, which never signifies justification, but *righteousness*, either performed by us, or imputed to us.—Δικαιωμα, the phrase which occurs in this place, and denotes the *right* or *demand* of the law; as that which is indispensably necessary to the justification of man.

ing his brethren the *Jews*. He is impreſſed with melancholy preſages, relating to their eternal ſtate *.—What was the cauſe of this tender ſolicitude? Had they caſt off all religion, and given themſelves over to groſs immoralities? On the contrary, they were worſhippers of the true GOD; and had, in their way, not only a *regard*, but a *zeal* for his honour †.—Wherefore then does this compaſſionate father in *Iſrael* feel the ſame trembling uneaſineſs, for his kinſmen according to the fleſh, as *Eli* felt for the endangered ark? Himſelf aſſigns the reaſon: Becauſe *they being ignorant of GOD's righteouſneſs, and going about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, have not ſubmitted themſelves to the righteouſneſs of GOD* ‡. Not knowing that immaculate holineſs, which the perfect nature, and equally-perfect law of the moſt high GOD, require;—being wilfully ignorant of that conſummate obedience, which an incarnate GOD vouchſafed to perform, for the juſtification of his people;—they ſedulouſly, but fooliſhly endeavoured, to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs; to make it, ſcanty and decrepit as it was, the baſis of their hopes.—Thus were they reſting their everlaſting ALL on a bottom, not precarious only, but irreparably ruinous. A boundleſs *eternity* the fabric! yet they built (wonder O heavens!) on the *foam* of the waters! and (which added ſtubbornneſs to their folly) in avowed contempt of that ſtrong and ſure foundation, laid by God's own hand in *Zion*.—For this the good apoſtle was afflicted, with "great heavineſs and continual ſorrow." For this he made the prophet's pathetic complaint his own; *Oh! that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might bewail, day and night* ‖, the incorrigible perverſeneſs of my people! *For my people have committed two evils;* in not thankfully ſubmitting to the righteouſneſs of GOD, *they have forſaken the fountain of living waters;* in attempting

* Rom. ix. 2. † Rom. x. 2. ‡ Rom. x. 3. ‖ Jer. ix. 1.

to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, *they have hewed themſelves out ciſterns, broken ciſterns that can hold no water* *.

Having ſhewed *their* fatal error, he ſtrengthens his repreſentation, by diſplaying the happy ſucceſs of the *Gentiles.—What ſhall we ſay then?* This, however improbable it may ſeem, we confidently affirm, *That the Gentiles, who followed not after righteouſneſs*, who had no knowledge of it, and no concern about it; even they *have attained to righteouſneſs* †.—Strange aſſertion! How is this poſſible! Doubtleſs, the righteouſneſs which they attained, could not be any perſonal righteouſneſs. Of this they were totally deſtitute. Inſtead of practiſing moral virtues, or religious duties, they were immerſed in ſenſuality, and abandoned to idolatry. It muſt therefore be the evangelical, the imputed righteouſneſs, *even that which* was wrought by *CHRIST*, and *is* received *by faith* ‡.

Iſrael, in the mean time, the nominal *Iſrael*, *who*, with great pretenſions to ſanctity, and many coſtly oblations, *followed after the law of righteouſneſs, hath not attained to the law of righteouſneſs*. Attained! They have

* Jer. ii. 13.

† Surely, this muſt ſignify more, than "attaining to the "*profeſſion* of a religion, whereby they may be juſtified and "ſaved." To this multitudes attain, who continue, as the prophet ſpeaks, *ſtout-hearted and far from righteouſneſs:* who derive no real benefit from their profeſſion; but are rendered utterly inexcuſable, and liable to more aggravated condemnation.

‡ Surely, *the righteouſneſs, which is by faith*, cannot conſiſt "in humbly *committing* the ſoul to *CHRIST*, in the way "that he hath appointed." According to this notion, the juſtifying righteouſneſs would ſpring from ourſelves; would be conſtituted by an act of our own, and not by the perfect obedience of our LORD.

I am ſorry to ſee this, and the preceding interpretation, in the works of an *expoſitor*, whoſe learning I admire, whoſe piety I reverence, and whoſe memory I honour. Yet I muſt ſay, on this occaſion, with one of the ancient philoſophers, *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, ſed magis amica Veritas.*

have done nothing less. They are fallen vastly short of it; they are pronounced guilty by it; they stand condemned before it *.—*Wherefore* did they so grosly mistake, and so grievously miscarry? *Because* they forsook the good old way, in which *Abraham*, *David*, and their pious ancestors walked. They adopted a new scheme; and would fain have substituted their own, instead of relying on a SAVIOUR's righteousness. *They sought* for justification, *not by faith*, *but as it were by the works of the law*†. A method which their fathers knew not; which their GOD ordained not; and which proved, as it always will prove, not only abortive, but destructive.—At this stone they stumbled; on this rock they split. Let their ruin be a *way-mark*, and the apostle's observation a *light-house* to my *Theron*.

Our zealous writer tries every expedient. He mingles hope with terror. Having pointed out the *rock* on which the *Israelites* suffered shipwreck, he directs us to the *haven*, in which sinners may cast anchor, and find safety. He gives us a fine descriptive view of the *Christian's* complete happiness. He opens (if I may continue the metaphor) a free and ample port for perishing souls; not formed by a neck of land, or a ridge of mountains, but by a magnificent chain of spiritual blessings. All proceeding from, and terminating in, that precious corner-stone *JESUS CHRIST*, *who*

* This, I apprehend, is the purport af the apostle's speech, when he tells, that his countrymen *had not attained unto the law of righteousness*. He uses the figure μειοσις, and means more than he expresses. Somewhat like the dramatic poet, who says of certain literary pretenders,

Qui se primos esse rerum omnium existimant,
Nec tamen sunt.

That is, *they are quite the reverse*.—Or like the prophet in the close of this chapter, who assures the believers in *JESUS*, *They shall not be ashamed;* that is, they shall be *encouraged*, *emboldened*, *established*.

† Rom. ix. 30, 31, 32.

who of GOD is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: wisdom*, to enlighten our ignorant minds; *righteousness* †, to justify our guilty persons; *sanctification* †, to renew our depraved natures; *redemption*, to rescue us from all evil; and render us, both in body and soul, perfectly and eternally happy.—Let it be remarked, how carefully our inspired writer sets aside all *sufficiency*, as well as all *merit* in man. He represents the whole of our salvation, both in its procurement and application, as a work of freest grace. *CHRIST* is, and not we ourselves, the author of this glorious restoration, the cause of this great felicity. *He is made* all this unto us.—*How?* Not by our own resolution and strength; but *of GOD*, by the agency of his mighty power, and blessed SPIRIT. *He* shews us the all-sufficient fulness of *CHRIST*. *He* brings us by ardent longings to *CHRIST*. *He* implants us into *CHRIST*, and makes us partakers of his merits.

In the process of the same epistle, the sacred penman enumerates the *constituent parts* of that great salvation, which the SON of GOD has procured for ruined sinners. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT*

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

† † *Righteousness* and *sanctification;* the former *imputed*, the latter *inherent*. This preserves a *distinction* between the noble articles, and assigns to each a grand share in the œconomy of salvation.—To say, that, if one of the blessings is communicated by way of imputation, the other should be communicated in the same manner, seems to be *cavilling*, rather than *arguing:* because the subjects are of a different nature, and therefore must be enjoyed in a different way.—The *cocoa* tree is, to the *American*, food and clothing, a habitation and domestic utensils. But must we suppose it administering to *all* these uses in *one* and the *same* unvaried method? Because in one respect it is eaten, in another it is wore, must it be thus applied in all? I believe, the illiterate savage, who enjoys the several gifts, need not be taught the absurdity of such a supposition.

SPIRIT of GOD *. Ye are *washed;* cleansed from the filth, and discharged from the guilt, of all your iniquities. Ye are *sanctified;* delivered from the death of sin, and endued with a living principle of holiness. Ye are *justified*; restored to a state of acceptance with GOD, and invested with a title to eternal glory. All which inestimable prerogatives are conferred upon the true believer, *in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST*; in consideration of his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness. *By the SPIRIT of our GOD;* through the efficacy of his operation, revealing *CHRIST* and working faith in the heart.

Some gentlemen have talked of a *new remedial* law; whereas the apostle declares, that *CHRIST is the end of the* old, the unalterable, the *Mosaic law, for righteousness to every one that believeth*†.—Follow the course of a river, it will constantly lead you to the ocean. Trace the veins of the body, they invariably unite in the heart. Mark likewise the tendency of the law, it no less constantly and invariably conducts you to *CHRIST*, as the centre of its views, and the consummation of its demands.—The *moral* law aims at discovering our guilt, and demonstrating our inexpressible need of a SAVIOUR. The *ceremonial* points him out, as suffering in our stead, making reconciliation for iniquity, and purging away every defilement with his blood.—They *both* direct the wretched transgressor, to renounce himself, and fly to the REDEEMER; who alone has paid that perfect obedience, and brought in that everlasting righteousness, which the sinner wants, and the law exacts; who is, therfore, the only proper *accomplishment* of the one, and the only suitable *supply* for the other.

What is the grand design of the whole scriptures? St *Paul*, displaying their sublime origin, and enumerating the gracious purposes they are intended to serve,

* 1 Cor. vi. 11. † Rom. x. 4.

ſerve, writes thus: *All ſcripture is given by inſpiration of GOD; and is profitable—for doctrine*, to declare and eſtabliſh religious truth;—*for reproof*, to convince of ſin, and to refute error—*for correction** or renovation of the heart, and reformation of the life;—*for inſtruction in righteouſneſs*, in that righteouſneſs, which could never have been learned from any other book, and in which alone ſinful men may appear with comfort before their GOD.

We have ſeen the principal *ſcope* of the *law*, and the leading *deſign* of the *ſcriptures*: let us add one inquiry more. What is the chief *office* of the SPIRIT?—If all theſe coincide, and uniformly terminate in the imputed righteouſneſs of *CHRIST*, we have a confirmation of its *reality* and *excellence*, great as man can deſire, I had almoſt ſaid, great as GOD can impart.—What ſays our LORD upon this point? *When he, the SPIRIT of truth is come, he ſhall convince† the world of ſin, of righteouſneſs, and of judgment. Of ſin, becauſe they believe not on me: of righteouſneſs, becauſe I go to my FATHER, and ye ſee me no more: of judgment, becauſe the prince of this world is judged‡.*—Is it poſſible for words to be more *weighty* and *comprehenſive?* Here is a ſummary of Chriſtian faith, and of Chriſtian holineſs. Not that *ſuperficial* holineſs, which is patched up of devotional forms, and goes no farther than external performances; but that which is *vital*, and ſprings from the heart; conſiſts in power, not in mere profeſſion; whoſe praiſe, if not of men, who are ſmitten with pompous outſides, is ſure to be of GOD, who diſtinguiſhes the things which are excellent.

He

* Tim. iii. 16. Προς επανορθωσιν.

† *He ſhall convince*, ſeems to be the moſt proper tranſlation of ελεγξει, as it implies the *ſure ſucceſs*, which attends the operation of the divine SPIRIT.—Man may *reprove*, and no conviction enſue. Whereas that almighty AGENT not only reproves, but reproves *with power*; ſo as to determine the judgment, and ſway the affections.

‡ John xvi. 8, 9, 10, 11.

He shall convince the world of sin; of original and actual sin. The sin of their nature, as well as the sin of their life; the sin of their best deeds, no less than of their criminal commissions, and blameable omissions. Above all, of their sinning against the sovereign, the only remedy, by unbelief; *because they believe not on me.*—He shall convince *of righteousness;* of the divine REDEEMER's righteousness, which the foregoing conviction must render peculiarly welcome: convince them, that it was wrought out in behalf of disobedient and defective mortals; that it is absolutely perfect, and sufficient to justify even the most ungodly. Of all which an incontestable proof is given, by his resurrection from the dead, his triumphant ascension into heaven, and session at the right hand of his FATHER; *because I go to my FATHER, and ye see me no more**. —He shall convince of *judgment.* Those who are humbled under a sense of guilt, and justified thro' an imputed righteousness, shall be taught by happy experience, that *the prince of this world is condemned* and dethroned in their hearts: that their souls are rescued from the tyranny of Satan; are made victorious over their corruptions; and restored to the liberty,—the glorious liberty of the children of GOD.

You wonder, perhaps, that I have not strengthened my cause, by any quotation from the epistle to the *Galatians.* What I design, my dear *Theron*, is not to accumulate, but to select arguments. However, that I may not disappoint an expectation so reasonable, I proceed to lay before you a very nervous passage, from that masterly piece of sacred controversy.—Only let me just observe, that the epistle was written to persons, who had embraced Christianity, and professed an

* For, if the work had been imperfect in any degree, our REDEEMER, instead of taking up his stated and final residence in the regions of glory, must have descended again into this inferior world, to complete what was deficient.

an affiance in *CHRIST;* but would fain have *joined* circumcision, would fain have *superadded* their own religious duties, to the merits of their SAVIOUR, in order to constitute, at least, *some* part of their justifying righteousness. Against which error, the vigilant and indefatigable assertor of *the truth as it is in JESUS*, remonstrates,—"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but "by the faith of JESUS CHRIST, even we have believed in JESUS CHRIST; that we might be justified by the faith of CHRIST, and not by the works "of the law; for by the works of the law shall no "flesh be justified *."

We, who are Jews by nature, the descendents of *Abraham*, and GOD's peculiar people; have the tables of his law, and the ordinances of his worship; we who, in point of privileges, are greatly superior to the *Gentile* nations, and have all possible advantages for establishing (if such a thing were practicable) a righteousness of our own; what have *we* done?—*We have believed on JESUS CHRIST:* we have renounced ourselves; disclaimed whatever is our own; and depended wholly on the righteousness of *CHRIST*.—For what end? That by this *faith in CHRIST*, which receives his righteousness; pleads his righteousness; and presents nothing but his righteousness before the throne, *we might be justified*.—What motive has induced us to this practice? A firm persuasion, that by *the works of the law*, by sincere obedience, or personal holiness,

* *Gal.* ii. 15, 16. Observable, very observable is the zeal of our apostle, in this determined stand against the *most specious*, and therefore the most dangerous, encroachments of error. To express his ardent concern for the truth and purity of the gospel, the *works of the law* are mentioned no less than three times, and as often *excluded* from the affair of justification. *The faith of CHRIST* likewise is thrice inculcated, and as often asserted to be the *only* method of becoming righteous before GOD.

holineſs, *no man living* has been, and no man living *can be, juſtified before GOD.*

Are you tired, *Theron?* have I fatigued your attention, inſtead of convincing your judgment?—I will not harbour ſuch a ſuſpicion. It is pleaſing to converſe with thoſe, who have travelled into *foreign* countries, and ſeen the *wonders* of creation. We hearken to their narratives with delight. Every new adventure whets our curioſity, rather than palls our appetite. Muſt it not then afford a more ſublime ſatisfaction to be entertained with the diſcourſes of a perſon, who had, not indeed ſailed round the world, but made a journey to the *third heavens?* who had been admitted into the *paradiſe* of GOD, and heard things of infinite importance, and unutterable dignity?—This was the privilege of that incomparable man, whoſe obſervations and diſcoveries I have been preſenting to my friend. And I promiſe myſelf, he will not complain of wearineſs, if I enrich my epiſtle with one or two more of thoſe glorious truths.

GOD hath made HIM to be ſin for us who knew no ſin; that we might, not be put into a capacity of acquiring a righteouſneſs of our own, but *be made the righteouſneſs of GOD in him* ‡. In this text, the *double* imputation of our ſin to *CHRIST*, and of *CHRIST*'s righteouſneſs to us, is moſt emphatically taught, and moſt charmingly contraſted.—Moſt *emphatically taught.* For we are ſaid, not barely to be righteous, but to be made righteouſneſs itſelf; and not righteouſneſs only, but (which is the utmoſt that language can reach) the righteouſneſs of GOD.—Moſt *charmingly contraſted.* For one cannot but aſk, In what manner *CHRIST* was made ſin? In the very ſame manner we are made righteouſneſs. *CHRIST* knew no *actual* ſin; yet, upon his mediatorial interpoſition on our behalf, he was treated by divine juſtice, as a ſinful perſon. We likewiſe are deſtitute of all *legal* righteouſneſs; yet,

‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

upon our receiving *CHRIST*, and believing in his name, we are regarded by the divine MAJESTY as righteous creatures. This therefore cannot, in either caſe, be *intrinſically;* but muſt be, in both inſtances, *imputatively*.—Gracious, divinely-gracious exchange †! pregnant with amazing goodneſs, and rich with ineſtimable benefits. The inceſſant triumph of the *ſtrong*, the ſovereign conſolation of the *weak* believer!

Ceaſe your exultation, cries one, and come down from your altitudes. The term uſed in this verſe denotes, not ſo properly *ſin*, as an *offering for* ſin.—This is a mere ſuppoſal, which I may as reaſonably deny, as another affirm. Since the word occurs, much *more frequently* in the former ſignification, than in the latter; and ſince, by giving it the latter ſignification in the paſſage before us, we very much impair, if not totally deſtroy, the apoſtle's beautiful *antitheſis*.

However, not to contend, but to allow the remark; I borrow my reply from a brave old *champion* ‡ for the truths of the goſpel: "This text," ſays he, "invincibly proveth, that we are not juſtified in GOD's "ſight by righteouſneſs inherent in us, but by the "righteouſneſs of *CHRIST* imputed to us through "faith." After which he adds, what I make my anſwer

† *Ita ſcilicet* mirabili permutatione *mala noſtra in ſe recepit, ut bona ſua nobis largiretur; recepit miſeriam, ut largiretur miſericordiam; recepit maledictionem, ut benedictionis ſuæ compotes nos faceret; recepit mortem, ut xitam conferret; recepit peccatum, ut juſtitiam impertiretur.* Thus writes the judicious *Turrettine*. To which, in concurrence with the accurate *Witſius*, I ſubſcribe both with hand and heart.

‡ See Dr *Fulk*'s annotation on the place, in that valuable piece of ancient controverſy and criticiſm, *The examination of the Rhemiſh Teſtament*. Which, though not altogether ſo elegant and refined in the language, nor ſo delicate and genteel in the manner, as might be wiſhed, is nevertheleſs full of *ſound* divinity, *weighty* arguments, and *important* obſervations.—Would the young ſtudent be taught to diſcover the *very ſinews* of Popery, and be enabled to give an effectual blow to that complication of errors, I ſcarce know a treatiſe better calculated for the purpoſe.

swer to the objection; "That *CHRIST* was made "sin for us, because he was a sacrifice for sin, we con- "fess: but *therefore* was he a sacrifice for sin, because "our sin was imputed to him, and punished in him" —The poor delinquents under the *Mosaic* dispensation, who brought their sin-offering to the altar of the LORD, were directed to lay their hand on the devoted beast; signifying, by this usage, the transferring of guilt from the offerer to the sacrifice. Conformably to the import of this ceremony, *CHRIST* assumed our demerit; like a true *piacular* victim, suffered the punishment, which we had deserved; and which, without such a commutation, we must have undergone. So that our LORD's being made a sin-offering for us, does by no means invalidate, but very much confirm our doctrine. It necessarily implies the translation of our iniquity to his person; and, on the principles of analogy, must infer the imputation of *his righteousness* to our souls.

One passage more permit me to transcribe into my paper; and, at the same time, to wish, that it may be written on both our hearts; written, not with ink and pen, no, nor with the point of a diamond, but with the finger of the living GOD. *Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my LORD; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things; and do count them but dung, that I may win CHRIST, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of CHRIST, the righteousness which is of GOD through faith* *.

Be pleased to observe, that in this confession of faith, and with reference to the case of justification, the apostle renounces all those acts of supposed righteousness, which were *antecedent* to his conversion.—Nor does he repudiate them only, but all those more excellent services, by which he was so eminently distinguished,

* Phil. iii. 8, 9.

guiſhed, even *after* his attachment to *CHRIST*, and engagement in the *Chriſtian* miniſtry. As though he ſhould ſay,—"The privilege of being a *Hebrew* by "birth; the prerogative of being a *Phariſee* by pro- "feſſion; together with a behaviour exemplary, and "a reputation unblameable; all theſe, which were "once reckoned my higheſt gain, as ſoon as I became "acquainted with the glorious perfections of *CHRIST*, "*I counted* * *loſs for him*.—And now, though I have "been a *diſciple* many years; have walked in all "holy converſation and godlineſs; have endured, "for my divine MASTER's name, tribulations "above meaſure; have laboured more abundantly, "and more ſucceſsfully than all the apoſtles; yet "even *theſe* and *all other* attainments, of what kind "or of what date ſoever, I *count* † but loſs, for the "tranſcendant excellency of *CHRIST JESUS* "my LORD.—*Yea*, *doubtleſs* ‡; it is my deli- "berate and ſtedfaſt reſolution; what I have moſt "ſeriouſly adopted, and do publicly avow, that, ſpe- "cious as all theſe acquirements may ſeem, and va- "luable as they may be in other reſpects, I reckon "them *but dung*, that I may win *CHRIST* ‖. They "fade

* Ἡγημαι, *I have counted.*

† Ἡγημαι, relates to the preſent time, and comprehends preſent attainments, *I do count.*—Not ſome, or the greateſt part, but *all things.*—What? Is a courſe of ſobriety, and the exerciſe of morality, to be reckoned as dung? *All things*, ſays the apoſtle.—What? Is our moſt elevated devotion, and enlarged obedience, to be degraded at this monſtrous rate? *All things*, ſays the apoſtle. This is his invariable reply. And we may venture to affirm, that *he had the mind of CHRIST.*

‡ Perhaps αλλα μενουνγε may be tranſlated, *but truly.* As if he had ſaid, "But why ſhould I mention any more particulars? "*In truth*, I count *all* things, &c."

‖ Διὰ Χριστον—διὰ το υπερεχον—ινα Χριστον κερδησω—plainly imply this *comparative* or *relative* ſenſe. Virtues, which are the fruits of the SPIRIT, and labours, which are a bleſſing to mankind, muſt not be reckoned *abſolutely* or in *all* reſpects deſpicable: but

" fade into nothing, they dwindle into *leſs than no-*
" *thing*, if ſet in competition with his matchleſs obe-
" dience; and were they to ſuperſede my application
" to his merits, or weaken my reliance on his media-
" tion, they would be not contemptible only, but in-
" jurious.—Irreparably injurious,—*loſs itſelf*."

You will aſk, If he rejects all his own righteouſneſs, on *what* are his hopes fixed?—On a foundation, *extenſive* as the obedience of the REDEEMER's life and death, *unſhaken* as the dignity of his eternal power and GODHEAD. They are fixed on *the righteouſneſs which is of GOD*; the righteouſneſs which GOD the FATHER, in unſearchable wiſdom, provided; and which GOD the SON, in unutterable goodneſs, wrought.—Do you inquire, *How* he came to be inveſted with this righteouſneſs? The anſwer is ready and ſatisfactory. It was by the application of the divine SPIRIT, and the inſtrumentality of *faith*.—Leſt any ſhould imagine, that this faith might be ſubſtituted inſtead of his own obedience to the law, he puts an apparent difference between the righteouſneſs which juſtifies, and the faith by which it is received; not the righteouſneſs which *conſiſts in*, but is THROUGH *the faith of CHRIST*.—To ſhew the great importance of this diſtinction, how earneſtly he inſiſted upon it as a preacher, how much it tended to his conſolation as a *Chriſtian*, he repeats the ſentiment, he reinculcates the doctrine, *the righteouſneſs which is of GOD* BY *faith*.

Will

but only in a limited and qualified acceptation: deſpicable, not in themſelves, but as compared with the divinely-perfect righteouſneſs of *CHRIST*, or as referred to the infinitely-important article of juſtification.

That *Aſpaſio*, in this whole paragraph, ſpeaks the ſenſe of our church, will appear from the following extract:—" The " apoſtle St. *Paul* ſaith, He doth glory, in what? In the con-" tempt of his own righteouſneſs; and that he looketh for " the righteouſneſs of GOD by faith."

Homily of Salvation, part II.

Will *you* now, *Theron*, or shall *I*, poor unprofitable creatures, presume to rely on any performances or any accomplishments of our own? When that distinguished saint,—a perfect prodigy of gifts, of graces, and of zeal,—indefatigable in labours, unconquerable by afflictions, and of whose usefulness there is neither measure nor end;—when *he* denies himself in every view; depreciates all; disavows all; and makes mention of nothing, but the incomparable righteousness of his *obedient*, *dying*, *interceding* SAVIOUR.

What shall I say more? Shall I attempt to play the rhetorician, and borrow the insinuating arts of persuasion? This, after all the *cogent testimonies* produced, and all the *great authorities* urged, would be a needless parade. When our pen is a sun-beam, there is but little occasion to dip it in oil.

Instead of such an attempt, give me leave to make a frank and honest confession. I would conceal nothing from my friend. He should have a sash to my breast; throw it up at his pleasure; and see all that passes within.—Though I never had any temptation to that pernicious set of errors, which passes under the character of *Socinianism;* yet I had many searchings of heart, and much solicitous inquiry, how far we are indebted to *CHRIST's active* righteousness. Thoroughly persuaded, that *other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, even JESUS CHRIST*;* and that *there is no other name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved* †; yet, whether we were not to confine our believing regards to a *dying* SAVIOUR, was matter of considerable doubt.—At first, I was inclined to acquiesce in the affirmative. After long consideration and many prayers, my faith fixed upon the *whole* of *CHRIST's* mediatorial undertaking: which began in his spontaneous submission to the law; was carried on through all his meritorious life; and issued in his

* 1 Cor. iii. 11. † Acts iv. 12.

his atoning death.—This is now the basis of my confidence, and the bulwark of my happiness. Hither I fly; here I rest; as the dove, after her wearisome and fruitless rovings, returned to Noah, and rested in the ark.

This scheme first recommended itself to my *affections*; as making the most ample provision for the security and repose of a guilty conscience; which, when alarmed by the accusations of sin, is very apprehensive of its condition; and will not be comforted, till every scruple is satisfied, and all the obstructions to its peace are removed. Thus I reasoned with myself: "Tho' "there is, undoubtedly, something to be said for the "other side of the question; yet this is evidently the "safest method. And, in an affair of infinite conse-"quence, who would not prefer the safest expedient? "—Should the righteousness of *JESUS CHRIST* "be *indispensably* requisite, as a wedding-garment; "what will *they* do, when the great immortal KING "appears, who have refused to accept it? Whereas, "should it not prove *so absolutely* necessary, yet such a "dependence can never obstruct our salvation. It can "never be charged upon us as an article of contu-"macy or perverseness, that we thought *too meanly* "of our own, *too magnificently* of our LORD's obe-"dience. So that let the die turn either way, we are "exposed to no hazard.—This scheme takes in all that "the other systems comprehend, and abundantly "more. In this I find no defect, no flaw, no shadow "of insufficiency. It is somewhat like the *perfect cube*; "which, where-ever it may be thrown, or however "it may fall, is sure to settle upon its base.—Sup-"posing, therefore, the important beam should hang "in equilibrio, with respect to argument; these cir-"cumstances, cast into the scale, may very justly be "allowed to turn the balance."

Upon a more attentive examination of the subject, I perceived,—that this is the doctrine of our *national*

church; is enforced by the atteſtation of our ableſt divines; and has been, in all ages, the conſolation of the moſt eminent ſaints:—That it is the genuine ſenſe of ſcripture; and not ſome inferior or ſubordinate point, incidentally touched upon by the inſpired writers, but the *ſum* and *ſubſtance* * of their heavenly meſſage: that which conſtitutes the vitals of their ſyſtem, and is the very ſoul of their religion. On which account the whole goſpel is denominated from it, and ſtyled *the miniſtration of righteouſneſs*.—I was farther convinced, that this way of ſalvation magnifies, beyond compare, the divine law; is no leſs honourable to all the divine attributes; and exhibits the ever-bleſſed MEDIATOR in the moſt illuſtrious and the moſt delightful view:—All theſe conſiderations, under the influence of the eternal SPIRIT, have determined my *judgment*, and eſtabliſhed my *faith*. So that I truſt, neither the ſubtilties of wit, nor the ſneers of ridicule, nor any other artifice, ſhall ever be able to ſeparate me from the grace and righteouſneſs which are in *JESUS CHRIST*.

Let me now, by way of concluſion, review that awful ſubject which introduced the letter. Let me ſuppoſe the JUDGE, who *is at the door*, actually come; the great and terrible day, which is haſting forward †, really

* This doctrine runs through St. *Paul*'s writings, like a golden *warp*. While privileges, bleſſings, and evangelical duties are like a *woof* (if I may allude to the ornaments of the ſanctuary) of blue, of purple, of ſcarlet, and indeed of every pleaſant colour. *The righteouſneſs of GOD*, Rom. i. 17.—*The righteouſneſs from GOD*, Phil. iii. 10.—*Righteouſneſs by faith*, Rom. iii. 22.—*Righteouſneſs of faith*, Rom. iv. 11.—*Righteouſneſs without the law*, Rom. iii. 21.—*Righteouſneſs without works*, Rom. iv. 6.—*Righteouſneſs in the blood of CHRIST*, Rom. v. 9.—*Righteouſneſs by the obedience of CHRIST*, Rom. v. 19.—*Righteouſneſs not our own*, Phil. iii. 9.—*Righteouſneſs imputed by GOD*, Rom. iv. 6, 10, 22.

† The ſacred writers, I obſerve, often remind their readers of this grand event; often diſplay this *delightful dreadful* ſcene.—Their manner of ſpeaking ſhews, that they themſelves lived under

really commenced.—Hark! the trumpet ſounds the univerſal ſummons. The living are ſtruck with a death-like aſtoniſhment; the dead ſtart from their ſilent abodes.—See! the whole earth takes fire; the ſun is turned into darkneſs; and the ſtars fall from their ſpheres.—Behold! the *LORD JESUS* comes with myriads of his angels. The judgment is ſet, and the books are opened.

Obſerve thoſe exemplary *Chriſtians*, whoſe ſentiments I have been collecting. *They* renounce themſelves, and rely on their glorious SURETY. Methinks I hear them ſay, each as they quit their beds of duſt; *I will go forth* from the grave *in thy ſtrength*, Obleſſed *JESUS*; *and*, at the deciſive tribunal, *will make mention of thy righteouſneſs only*.—At the ſame time, will you, *Theron*, or ſhall I, ſtand forth and declare,—before the innumerable multitude of anxious ſinners and adoring ſeraphs,—"Let thoſe puſillanimous creatures fly for refuge to their SAVIOUR's righteouſneſs. We will confide in works, in accompliſhments of our own. We are the men, who have *perſonally* kept the divine law, and want no *ſuppoſitious* obedience from another. Let the eye that glances thro' immenſity, and penetrates the receſſes of the heart; let that holy and omniſcient eye, examine our temper, and ſift our conduct. We are bold to riſk our

 "ſouls,

under the habitual and joyful expectation of it; as perſons, who were *looking for, and haſting to, the coming of the day of GOD*.—They repreſent it, not only as *ſure*, but *near*; yea, very near, and upon the point to take place. *The LORD is at hand. The JUDGE is at the door. Yet a little while, and HE that ſhall come, will come, and will not tarry*.—The laſt paſſage is the moſt ſpirited and emphatical of them all; but has loſt much of its emphaſis by the *Engliſh* verſion.—It is in the original μικρον οσον οσον. A beautiful *pleonaſm*; by which the *Septuagint*, though too often inaccurate in tranſlating the *prophetic* text, have very happily expreſſed *Iſaiah's* מעט מעט which may, I think, be rendered in our language, *yet a very, very little while*. Heb. x. 37. Iſ. xxvi. 20.

" ſouls, and all their immortal intereſts, on the iſſue " of ſuch a ſcrutiny."

Perhaps, your mind is impreſſed with this *ſolemn ſcene*, and your thoughts recoil at ſuch *daring preſumption*. If ſo, it will be proper for me to withdraw, and leave you to your own meditations. At ſuch moments to obtrude on your company, would render me the troubleſome and officious, rather than

The reſpectful and affectionate,

ASPASIO.

LETTER VI.

THERON *to* ASPASIO.

Dear ASPASIO,

THE laſt evening was one of the fineſt I ever ſaw. According to my cuſtom, I made an excurſion into the open fields; and wanted nothing to complete the ſatisfaction, but my friend's company *. I could not but obſerve, how much your improving converſation heightened the charms of nature. When religion applied philoſophy, every thing was *inſtructive*, as well as *pleaſing*.—Not a breeze ſwept over the plains, to clear the ſky, and cool the air, but it tended alſo to diſperſe our doubts, and enliven our faith in the ſupreme all-ſufficient GOOD.--Not a cloud tinged the firmament with radiant colours, or amuſed the ſight with romantic ſhapes, but we beheld a picture of the preſent world, of its *fading* acquiſitions and *fantaſtic* joys, in the mimic forms and the tranſitory ſcene.---Even the weakeſt of the inſect-tribe, that ſkim the air in ſportive ſilence, addreſſed us with the ſtrongeſt incitements, and gave us the loudeſt calls, to be *active* in our day, and *uſeful* in our

* *Tu quod abes excepto, cætera lætus.*

our generation. They cried, at leaſt when you lent them your tongue,

Such is vain life, an idle flight of days,
A ſtill deluſive round of fickly joys,
A ſcene of little cares, and trifling paſſions,
If not ennobled by the deeds of virtue.

How often, at the approach of ſober eve, have we ſtole along the cloyſters of a ſequeſtered bower; attentive to the tale of ſome *querulous* current, that ſeemed to be ſtruck with horror at the awful gloom; and complained with heavier murmurs, as it paſſed under the blackening ſhades, and along the root-obſtructed channel!—Or elſe, far from the babbling brook, and ſoftly treading the graſſy path, we liſtened to the *nightingale*'s ſong; while every gale held its breath, and all the leaves forbore their motion, that they might neither drown nor interrupt the melodious wo.—From both which penſive ſtrains, you endeavoured to temper and chaſtiſe the exuberant gaiety of my ſpirits. You convinced me, that *true* joy is a ſerious thing *; is the child of ſedate thought, not the ſpawn of intemperate mirth; nurſed, not by the ſallies of diſſolute merriment, but by the exerciſe of ſerene contemplation.

Sometimes, at the gladſome return of morn, we have aſcended an airy eminence; and hailed the newborn day; and followed, with our delighted eye, the mazes of ſome glittering ſtream.—Here *ruſhing*, with impetuous fury, from the mountain's ſide; foaming over the rifted rocks, and roaring down the craggy ſteep; impatient as it were, to get free from ſuch rugged paths, and mingle with the beauties of the lower vale.—There ſlackening its headlong career, and ſmoothing its eddies into an even flow. While, deep emboſomed in the verdant mead, it *glides* through the cheriſhed and ſmiling herbage. Sometimes loſt amidſt cloſing willows; ſometimes emerging with freſh beauty from

* *Res ſevera eſt verum gaudium.* SEN.

from the leafy covert; always roving with an air of amorous complacency, as though it would careſs the fringed banks, and flowery glebe.—Reminded, by this watery monitor, of that conſtancy and vigour, with which the affections ſhould move towards the great *centre* of happineſs, *CHRIST JESUS;*—of that determined ardour, with which we ſhould break through the entanglements of temptation, and obſtacles of the world, in order to reach our everlaſting *reſt;*—and of the mighty difference between the turbulent, the frothy, the precipitate gratifications of vice, and the calm, the ſubſtantial, the permanent delights of *religion.*

Or elſe, with eager view, we have ſurveyed the extenſive proſpect, and wandered over all the magnificence of things; an endleſs variety of graceful objects, and delightful ſcenes! each ſoliciting our chief regard; every one worthy of our whole attention; all conſpiring to touch the heart with a mingled tranſport of wonder, of gratitude, and of joy.—So that we have returned from our rural expedition, not as the *ſpendthrift* from the gaming-table, curſing his ſtars, and raving at his ill-luck; gulled of his money, and the derided dupe of ſharpers: not as the *libertine* from the houſe of wantonneſs *, ſurfeited with the rank debauch,

*Solomon, in order to deter unwary youth from thoſe ſinks of uncleanneſs, repreſents the harlot under the character of a peſtilent hag, or baleful ſorcereſs. *Her feet go down to death*, Prov. v. 5. *Her houſe is* the high road *to hell*, Prov. vii. 27. yea, *her gueſts are in the depths of hell*, Prov. ix. 18.—The ſecond clauſe ſeems to be emphatical. The original expreſſion is in the plural number רבי I chuſe therefore to render it not ſimply *the road*, but more largely *the high road*: from which many other ways of guilt branch out, in which many other paths of ruin coincide. There Murder is often known to drench her dagger in blood; and Robbery forms the raſh reſolve, which ends in the ignominious halter. There Intemperance daily brews the bowl, which enervates the conſtitution, and

debauch, dogged by ſhame, goaded by remorſe, with a thouſand recent poiſons tingling in his veins. But we returned, as ſhips of commerce from the *golden* continent, or the *ſpicy* iſlands, with new acceſſions of ſublime improvement, and ſolid pleaſure: with a deeper veneration for the almighty CREATOR; with a warmer ſenſe of his unſpeakable favours; and with a more inflamed deſire, "to know him now by faith, "and after this life to have the fruition of his glo-"rious GODHEAD."

Sometimes, with an agreeable relaxation, we have transferred our cares, from the welfare of the nation, to the flouriſhing of the farm; and, inſtead of enacting regulations for the civil community, we have planned ſchemes for the cultivation of our ground, and the proſperity of our cattle.—Inſtead of attending to the courſe of fleets, and the deſtination of armies, we have directed the plough, where to rend the graſſy turf; or taught the honey ſuckle to wind round the arbour, and the jeſſamine to climb upon the wall.—Inſtead of interpoſing our friendly offices, to reconcile contending kingdoms; we have formed a *treaty* of *coalition*, between the ſtranger cyon, and the adopting tree; and, by the remarkable melioration of the enſuing fruit, demonſtrated (would contending empires regard the precedent) what advantages flow from pacific meaſures, and an amicable union.—Inſtead of unravelling the labyrinths of ſtate, and tracing the fineſſes of foreign courts; we have made ourſelves acquainted with the *politics* of nature, and obſerved how wonderfully, how myſteriouſly, that great projectreſs acts.

and transforms the man into a beaſt. While Diſeaſe, pale cadaverous noiſome diſeaſe, anticipates the putrefaction of the grave, and cauſes the wretched *martyrs* of *vice* to rot even above ground.—Well may every one, who loves life, and would fain ſee good days, cry out with a mixture of deteſtation and dread, "O my ſoul, come not thou into their horrid haunts!"

Dii meliora piis, erroremque hoſtibus illum! VIRG.

acts.—In this place she rears a vast trunk, and unfolds a multiplicity of branches, from one small berry. She qualifies, by her amazing operations, a few contemptible acorns, that were formerly carried in a child's lap, to bear the *British* thunder round the globe, and secure to our island the sovereignty of the ocean. —In another place, she produces from a dry grain, *first the* green *blade; then the* turgid *ear; afterwards* the full-grown and ripened *corn in the ear* *: repaying, with exact punctuality, and with lavish usury, the husband-man's toil, and the husband-man's loan; causing, by a most surprising resurrection, the death of one seed, to be fruitful in the birth of hundreds.

But I forget your caution, *Aspasio;* forget how kindly you have checked me, when I have been haranguing upon, I know not what, powers and works of nature. Whereas it is GOD who *worketh hitherto* †: who to this day exerts, and to the end of time will exert, that secret but unremitted energy, which is the life of this majestic system, and the cause of all its stupendous operations.—Let this shew you, how much I want my guide, my philosopher, and friend. Without his prompting aid, my genius is dull; my reflections are awkward; and my religious improvements jejune; somewhat like the *bungling* imitations of the tool, compared with the *masterly* effects of vegetation.—However, I will proceed; yet not from any view of informing my *Aspasio*, but only to draw a bill upon his pen; and lay him under an obligation to enrich me with another letter, upon the grand and excellent subject of his last.

Art is dim-sighted in her plans, and defective even in her most elaborate essays. But *Nature*, or rather nature's sublime AUTHOR, is indeed a designer, and *a workman that need not be ashamed* ‡. His eye strikes out ten thousand elegant models, and his touch executes

* Mark iv, 28. † John v. 17. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 15.

cutes all with inimitable perfection.—What an admirable ſpecimen is here, of the divine ſkill, and of the divine goodneſs. This terraqueous globe is intended, not only for a place of habitation, but for a ſtorehouſe of conveniences. If we examine the ſeveral apartments of our great abode; if we take a general *inventory* of our common goods; we ſhall find the utmoſt reaſon to be charmed with the diſplays, both of nice œconomy, and of boundleſs profuſion.

Obſerve the *ſurface* of this univerſal meſſuage. The ground, coarſe as it may ſeem, and trodden by every foot, is nevertheleſs the *laboratory*, where the moſt exquiſite operations are performed; the *ſhop*, if I may ſo ſpeak, where the fineſt manufactures are wrought. Though a multitude of generations have always been accommodated, and though a multitude of nations are daily ſupplied by its liberalities, it ſtill continues inexhauſted; is a reſource that never fails; a magazine never to be drained.

The *unevenneſs* of the ground, far from being a blemiſh or a defect, heightens its beauty, and augments its uſefulneſs.—*Here* it is ſcooped into deep and ſheltered vales, almoſt conſtantly covered with a ſpontaneous growth of verdure: which, all tender and ſucculent, compoſes an eaſy couch, and yields the moſt agreeable fodder for the various tribes of cattle.—*There* it is extended into a wide, open champaign country; which annually repleniſhed with the huſbandman's ſeed, ſhoots into a copious harveſt: A harveſt, not only of that *principal wheat*, which is the ſtaff of our life, and ſtrengthens our heart; but of the *appointed barley* *, and various other ſorts of grain, which yield an excellent food for our animals; and either enable them to diſpatch our drudgery, or elſe fatten their fleſh for our tables.

The furrows, obedient to the will of man, vary their

* Iſ. xxviii. 25.

their produce *. They bring forth a crop of tall, flexile, slender plants †; whose thin filmy coat, dried, attenuated, and skilfully manufactured, transforms itself into some of the most necessary *accommodations* of life, and genteelest *embellishments* of society.—It is wove into ample volumes of cloth; which, fixed to the mast, give wings to our ships, and waft them to the extremities of the ocean. It is twisted into vast lengths of cordage; which add nerves to the crane, and lend sinews to the pulley; or else, adhering to the anchor, they fasten the vessel even on the fluctuating element, and secure its station even amidst driving tempests.—It furnishes the duchess with her costly head-dress, and delicately-fine ruffles. No less strong than neat, it supplies the ploughman with his coarse frock, and the sailor with his clumsy trowsers. Its fibres, artfully ranged by the operations of the loom, cover our tables with a graceful elegance, and surround our bodies with a cherishing warmth. On this the painter spreads the colours, which inchant the eye; in this the merchant packs the wares, which enrich the world.

Yonder, the *hills*, like a grand amphitheatre, arise. Amphitheatre! All the pompous works of *Roman* magnificence, are less than mole-banks, are mere cockle-shells, compared with those majestic elevations of the earth. Some clad with mantling vines; some crowned with towering cedars; some ragged with mishapen rocks, or yawning with subterraneous dens; whose rough and inaccessible crags, whose hideous and gloomy cavities, are not only a continual refuge for the wild goats, but have often proved an asylum to persecuted merit ‡, and a safeguard to the most valuable lives.

At

* One may venture to say of the earth, with regard to its vegetable operation,

Omnia transformat sese in miracula rerum.

† Flax and hemp.

‡ To *David*, from *Saul*'s malice; to *Elijah*, from *Jezebel*'s vengeance;

At a greater distance, the *mountains* lift their frozen brows, or penetrate the clouds with their aspiring peaks. Their frozen brows *arrest* the roving, and *condense* the rarefied vapours *. Their caverned bowels collect the dripping treasures, and send them abroad, in gradual communications, by trickling springs. While their steep sides *precipitate* the watery stores †, rolling them on with such a forcible impulse, that they never intermit their unwearied course, till they have swept through the most extensive climes, and regained their native seas.

The *vineyard* swells into a profusion of clusters: some tinged with the deepest purple, and delicately clouded with azure: some clad with a whitish transparent skin, which shews the tempting kernels, lodged in luscious nectar.—The vine requires a strong reflection of the sun-beams, and a very large proportion

vengeance to many of the primitive *Christians*, from the rage of persecuting emperors: *they wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth*, Heb. xi. 38.

* Therefore styled—*nimbosa cacumina montis.* VIRG.

† It is observed, that the largest rivers in the world, those which roll the heaviest burden of waters, and perform the most extensive circuit through the nations, generally take their rise from mountains. The *Rhine*, the *Rhone*, and the *Po*, all descend from the *Alps*. The *Tygris* derives its rapid flood from the everlasting snows and steep ridges of *Niphates*. And, to mention no more instances, the river *Amazones*, which pours itself through a multitude of provinces, and waters near eighteen hundred leagues of land, has its urn in the caverns, and its impetus from the precipices, of that immense range of hills, the *Andes*.

If the reader is inclined to see the origin and formation of rivers described, in all the sublimity of diction, and with all the graces of poetry, he may find this entertainment in Mr *Thomson*'s Autumn, *lin.* 781.

Amazing scene! behold, the glooms disclose.
I see the rivers in their infant beds!
Deep, deep I hear them, lab'ring to get free! &c.

of warmth. How commodiously do the hills and mountains, minister to this purpose! May we not call those vast declivities, the *garden-walls* of nature? which, far more effectually than the most costly glasses, or most artful green-houses, concenter the solar heat, and complete the maturity of the grape: distending it with a liquor of the finest scent, the most agreeable relish, and the most exalted qualities; such as dissipate sadness, and inspire vivacity; such as make glad the heart of man, and most sweetly prompt, both his gratitude and his duty, to the munificent GIVER. —I grieve, and I blush for my fellow-creatures, that any should *abuse* this indulgence of heaven; that any should turn so valuable a gift of GOD into an instrument of sin; turn the most exhilarating of cordials into poison, madness and death.

The *kitchen-garden* presents us with a new train of benefits. In its blooming ornaments, what unaffected beauty! in its culinary productions, what diversified riches! It ripens a multitude of nutrimental esculents, and almost an equal abundance of medicinal herbs; distributing refreshments to the healthy, and administering remedies to the sick.—The *orchard*, all fair and ruddy, and bowing down beneath its own delicious burden, gives us a fresh demonstration of our CREATOR's kindness; regales us, first, with all the delicacies of summer-fruits; next, with the more lasting succession of autumnal dainties.

What is nature, but a series of wonders, and a fund of delights! That such a variety of fruits, so beautifully coloured, so elegantly shaped, and so charmingly flavoured, should arise from the earth! than which nothing is more insipid, sordid, and despicable. —I am struck with pleasing astonishment at the *cause* of these fine effects, and no less surprised at the *manner* of bringing them into existence. I take a walk in my garden, or a turn through my orchard, in the month of *December*. There stand several logs of wood fastened

faſtened to the ground. They are erect indeed and ſhapely, but without either ſenſe or motion. No human hand will touch them, no human aid will ſuccour them; yet, in a little time, they are beautified with bloſſoms, they are covered with leaves, and at laſt are loaded with mellow treaſures; with the downy peach and the poliſhed plum; with the muſky apricot and the juicy pear; with the cherry, and its coral pendants, glowing through lattices of green,

——————————— *and dark*
Beneath her ample leaf, the luſcious fig.

I have wondered at the ſtructure of my watch; wondered more at the deſcription of the ſilk-mills; moſt of all, at the account of thoſe prodigious engines invented by *Archimedes*. But what are all the inventions of all the geometricians and mechanics in the world, compared with theſe inconceivably nice *automata* * of nature! Theſe *ſelf-operating machines* diſpatch their buſineſs, with a punctuality that never miſtakes, with a dexterity that cannot be equalled. In ſpring, they clothe themſelves with ſuch unſtudied but exquiſite finery, as far exceeds the embroidery of the needle, or the labours of the loom. In autumn, they preſent

* *Automata*, or *ſelf operating* machines; not meant to ſet aſide the ſuperintendency of Providence, but only to exclude the co-operation of man.

The word αυτοματη is uſed by our MASTER; is a very fine, and moſt expreſſive word; for which reaſons, I have ventured to give it a kind of *Engliſh* naturalization. It ſignifies, ſays a *Greek* ſcholiaſt, ταϛ μηχαναϛ, αι κατ' αυλαϛ ενεργουσαι. See *Mark* iv. 28.—It is an explication and an abridgment of that remarkable phraſe, which occurs in the *Moſaic* hiſtory of the creation, ברא אלהים לעשות אשר Gen. ii. 3. *which GOD created and made*, appears tautological, and is by no means an exact tranſlation. It ſhould rather be interpreted, *which GOD created in order to make;* to make, by theſe prolific inſtruments and re-producing principles, a continual ſucceſſion of animals, vegetables, and creatures.

present us with such a collation of sweetmeats, and such blandishments of taste, as surpass all that the most critical luxury could prepare, or the most lavish fancy imagine.—So that those *coarse* and *senseless* logs first decorate the divine creation, then perform the honours of the table.

If, amidst these ordinary productions of the earth, GOD appears so *great in counsel and mighty in work* *; what may we expect to see in the palaces of heaven; in the hierarchies of angels; and in that wonderful REDEEMER, who is, beyond all other objects, beyond all other manifestations, *the wisdom of GOD, and the power of GOD* †!

The *forest* rears myriads of massy bodies, which, tho' neither gay with blossoms, nor rich with fruit, supply us with timber of various kinds, and of every desirable quality ‡. But who shall cultivate such huge trees, diffused over so vast a space? The toil were endless. See therefore the all-wise and ever-gracious ordination of Providence ‡. They are so constituted, that they have no need of the spade and the pruning-knife. Nay, the little cares of man would diminish, rather than augment their dignity and their usefulness. The more they are neglected, the better they thrive; the more wildly grand and magnificent they grow.

When felled by the axe, they are sawed into beams, and sustain the roofs of our houses; they are fashioned into carriages, and serve for the conveyance of the heaviest

* Jer. xxxii. 19. † 1 Cor. i. 24.

‡ *Tully* has given us an abridgment of all the preceding particulars; which, I think, is one of the finest landscapes in miniature, that the descriptive pen ever drew.—*Terra universa cernatur, vestita floribus, herbis, arboribus, frugibus; quorum omnium incredibilis multitudo insatiabili varietate distinguitur. Adde huc fontium gelidas perennitates, liquores perlucidos amnium, riparum vestitus viridissimos, speluncarum concavas altitudines, saxorum asperitates, impendentium montium altitudines, immensitatesque camporum.* De nat. Deor. lib. II.

vieſt loads.—Their ſubſtance ſo *pliant*, that they yield to the chizel of the turner, and are ſmoothed by the plane of the joiner; are wrought into the niceſt diminutions of ſhape, and compoſe ſome of the fineſt branches of houſhold furniture.—Their texture ſo *ſolid*, that they form the moſt important parts of thoſe mighty engines; which, adapting themſelves to the play of mechanic powers, diſpatch more work in a ſingle hour, than could otherwiſe be accompliſhed in many days. At the ſame time, their preſſure is ſo *light*, that they float upon the waters; and glide along the ſurface, almoſt with as much agility, as the finny fry glance through the deep.—Thus, while they impart magnificence to architecture, and beſtow numberleſs conveniencies on the family; they conſtitute the very baſis of navigation, and give expedition, give being to commerce.

Amidſt the inacceſſible depths of the foreſt, an habitation is aſſigned for thoſe *ravenous* beaſts, whoſe appearance would be frightful, and their neighbourhood dangerous to mankind. Here the ſternly-majeſtic lion rouſes himſelf from his den; ſtalks through the midnight-ſhades; and awes the ſavage herds with his roar. Here the fiery tyger ſprings upon his prey, and the gloomy bear trains up her whelps. Here the ſwift leopard ranges, and the grim wolf prowls, and both in queſt of murder and blood.—Were theſe horrid animals to dwell in our fields, what *havock* would they make? what *conſternation* would they ſpread? But they voluntarily bury themſelves in the deepeſt receſſes of the deſert; while the ox, the horſe, and the ſerviceable quadrupeds, live under our inſpection, and keep within our call; profiting us as much by their preſence, as the others oblige us by their abſence.

If, at any time, thoſe ſhaggy monſters make an excurſion into the habitable world, it is when man retires to his chamber, and ſleeps in ſecurity. The ſun, which invites other creatures abroad, gives them the

the signal to retreat. *The sun ariseth, and they get them away, and lay them down in their dens* †. Strange! that the orient light, which is so pleasing to us, should strike such terror on them! should, more effectually than a legion of guards, put them all to flight, and clear the country of those formidable enemies!

If we turn our thoughts to the *atmosphere*, we find a most curious and exquisite apparatus of *air*: which, because no object of our sight, is seldom observed, and little regarded; yet is a source of innumerable advantages. And all these advantages (which is almost incredible) are fetched from the very jaws of ruin. My meaning may be obscure, therefore I explain myself.

We live plunged, if I may so speak, in an ocean of air. Whose *pressure*, upon a person of a moderate size, is equal to the weight of *twenty thousand* pounds. Tremendous consideration! Should the ceiling of a room, or the roof of a house, fall upon us with half that force, what destructive effects must ensue? Such a force would infallibly drive the breath from our lungs, or break every bone in our bodies. Yet so admirably has the divine wisdom contrived this æreal fluid, and so nicely counterpoised its dreadful power, that we receive not the slightest hurt; we suffer no manner of inconvenience; we even *enjoy* the load. Instead of being as a mountain on our loins, it is like wings to our feet, or like sinews to our limbs.—Is not this *common* ordination of Providence, thus considered, somewhat like the miracle of the burning bush; whose tender and combustible substance, though in the midst of flames, was neither consumed nor injured ‡? Is it not almost as marvellous, as the prodigy of the three *Hebrew* youths, who walked in the fiery furnace, without having a hair of their head singed, or so much as

† Psal. civ. 22. ‡ Exod. iii. 2.

as the ſmell of fire paſſing on their garments *?—Surely we have reaſon to ſay unto GOD, *O! how terrible*, yet how beneficent, *art thou in thy works!*

The air, though too weak to ſupport our flight, is a thoroughfare for innumerable wings. Here the whole commonwealth of *birds* take up their abode. Here they lodge and expatiate, beyond the reach of their adverſaries. Were they to run upon the earth, they would be expoſed to ten thouſand dangers, without proper ſtrength to reſiſt them, or ſufficient ſpeed to eſcape them. Whereas, by mounting the ſkies, and *lifting themſelves up on high*, they are ſecure from peril, *they ſcorn the horſe and his rider* †—Some of them perching upon the boughs, others ſoaring amidſt the firmament, entertain us with their *notes*; which are muſical and agreeable, when heard at this convenient diſtance; but would be noiſy and importunate, if brought nearer to our ears.—Here many of thoſe feathered families reſide, which yield us a delicious *treat*; yet give us no trouble, put us to no expence, and, till the moment we want them, are wholly out of our way.

The air, commiſſioned by its all-bountiful AUTHOR, charges itſelf with the adminiſtration of ſeveral offices, which are perfectly obliging, and no leſs ſerviceable to mankind.—Co-operating with our lungs, it *ventilates* the blood, and refines our fluids. It qualifies and attempers the vital warmth, promotes and exalts the animal ſecretions. Many days we might live, or even whole months, without the light of the ſun, or the glimmering of a ſtar. Whereas, if we are deprived, only for a few minutes, of this aerial ſupport, we ſicken, we faint, we die.—The ſame *univerſal nurſe* has a conſiderable ſhare in cheriſhing the ſeveral tribes of plants. It helps to transfuſe vegetable vigour into the trunk of the oak, and a blooming gaiety into the ſpread of the roſe.

The

* Dan. iii. 27. † Job xxxix. 18.

The air undertakes to convey to our noſtrils the extremely-ſubtile *effluvia*, which tranſpire from odoriferous bodies. Thoſe detached particles are ſo imperceptibly ſmall, that they would elude the moſt careful hand, or eſcape the niceſt eye. But this truſty depoſitary *receives* and *eſcorts* the inviſible vagrants, without loſing ſo much as a ſingle atom: entertaining us, by this means, with the delightful ſenſations, which ariſe from the fragrance of flowers; and admoniſhing us, by the tranſmiſſion of offenſive ſmells, to withdraw from an unwholeſome ſituation, or beware of any pernicious food.

The air, by its undulating motion, conducts to our ear all the diverſities of *ſound;* and thereby diſcharges the duty of a moſt ſeaſonable and faithful monitor. As I walk acroſs the ſtreets of *London*, with my eye engaged on other objects; a dray, perhaps, with all its load, is driving down directly upon me. Or, as I ride along the road, muſing and unapprehenſive, a chariot and ſix is whirling on, with a rapid career, at the heels of my horſe. The air, like a *vigilant* friend, in pain for my welfare, immediately takes the alarm; and, while the danger is at a conſiderable diſtance, diſpatches a courier to advertiſe me of the approaching miſchief. It even thunders in my ear; and, with a *clamorous* but *kind* importunity, urges me to be upon my guard, and provide for my ſafety.

The air wafts to our ſenſe all the modulations of *muſic*, and the more agreeable entertainments of refined converſation. When *Myrtilla* ſtrikes the ſilver ſtrings, and teaches the willing harpſichord to warble with her CREATOR's praiſe; when her ſacred ſonata warms the heart with devotion, and wings our deſires to heaven.--When *Cleora* tunes her ſong, or the nightingale imitates her inchanting voice: when ſhe heightens every melodious note, with her adored REDEEMER's name; and ſo ſmooths her charming tones, ſo breathes her rapturous ſoul, "that GOD's

"own ear liſtens delighted."—When Wiſdom takes its ſeat on *Mitio*'s tongue; and flows, in perſpicuous periods, and inſtructive truths, amidſt the choſen circle of his acquaintance.—When Benevolence, aſſociated with Perſuaſion, dwell on *Nicander*'s lips, and plead the cauſe of injured innocence, or oppreſſed virtue.—When Goodneſs, leagued with Happineſs, accompany *Euſebius* into the pulpit, and reclaim the libertine from the ſlavery of his vices; diſengage the infidel from the faſcination of his prejudices; and ſo affectionately, ſo pathetically invite the whole audience, to partake the unequalled joys of pure religion.—In all theſe caſes, the air diſtributes every muſical variation with the utmoſt *exactneſs*; and delivers the ſpeaker's meſſage, with the moſt punctual *fidelity*. Whereas, without this internuncio, all would be ſullen and unmeaning ſilence. We ſhould loſe both the pleaſure and the profit; neither be charmed with the harmonious, nor improved by the articulate accents.

The breezes of the air, when vague and unconfined, are ſo very gentle, that they ſport with the moſt inoffenſive wantonneſs amidſt *Ophelia*'s locks, and ſcarce diſadjuſt a ſingle curl. But, when collected and applied by the contrivance of man, they act with ſuch *prodigious force*, as is ſufficient to whirl round the hugeſt wheels, though clogged with the moſt encumbering loads. They make the ponderous millſtones move as ſwiftly, as the dancer's heel; and the maſſy beams play as nimbly, as the muſician's finger.

If we climb, in ſpeculation, the higher regions, we find an endleſs ſucceſſion of *clouds*, fed by evaporations from the ocean. The clouds are themſelves a kind of ocean, ſuſpended in the air with amazing ſkill. They travel, in detached parties, and in the quality of *itinerant ciſterns*, round all the terreſtrial globe. They fructify, by proper communications of moiſture, the ſpacious paſtures of the wealthy; and gladden, with no leſs liberal ſhowers, the cottager's little ſpot. Nay,

so condescending is the benignity of their great Proprietor, that they *satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and cause*, even in the most uncultivated wilds, *the bud of the tender herb to spring forth**: that the natives of the lonely desert, those savage herds which know no master's stall, may nevertheless experience the care, and rejoice in the bounty, of an all supporting PARENT.

How wonderful! that the water, which is much *denser* and far *heavier* than the air, should rise into it; make its way through it; and take a station in the very uppermost regions of it! This, one would imagine, were almost as impossible, as for the rivers to run back to their source. Yet Providence has contrived a way to render it not only practicable, but matter of continual occurrence.

How wonderful! that *pendent lakes* should be diffused, or *fluid mountains* heaped over our heads; and both sustained in the thinnest parts of the atmosphere! We little think of that surprising expedient, which, without conduits of stone, or vessels of brass, keeps such loads of water in a buoyant state. *Job* and *Elihu* considered this, and were struck with holy admiration. *Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds!* how such ponderous bodies are made to hang with an even poise, and hover like the lightest down? These are *the wondrous works of HIM, who is perfect in knowledge*†. *He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds: and the cloud*, though nothing is more loose and fluid, becomes, by his almighty order, strong and tenacious as casks of iron; it *is not rent*‡ under all the weight.

When the sluices are opened, and the waters descend, we might reasonably suspect, that they should burst forth in cataracts, or pour out themselves in torrents. Whereas, instead of such a disorderly and precipitate effusion, which would be infinitely pernicious, they coalesce into *globules*, and are dispensed in gentle *showers*.

* Job xxxviii. 27. † Job xxxvii. 16. ‡ Job xxvi. 8.

ſhowers. They are often attenuated into the ſmallneſs of a hair *: they ſpread themſelves, as if they were ſtrained through the orifices of the fineſt watering-pot; and form thoſe *ſmall drops of rain, which the clouds diſtil upon man abundantly* †. Thus, inſtead of drowning the earth, and ſweeping away its fruits, they cheriſh univerſal nature; and, in conformity to the practice of their great MASTER, diſtribute their humid ſtores to men, to animals, and vegetables, *as they are able to bear them* ‡.

Beſides the reſervoirs of water, here are cantoned various parties of *winds*, mild or fierce, gentle or boiſterous; furniſhed with breezy wings, to fan the glowing firmament, and diffuſe refreſhment on a fainting world; or elſe fitted to act as an univerſal *beſom*; and, by ſweeping the chambers of the atmoſphere, to preſerve the fine aereal fluid free from feculencies. Without this wholeſome agency of the winds, the air would ſtagnate; become putrid; and ſurround us, in the literal ſenſe of the words, with *darkneſs that might be felt* ‖. *London*, *Paris*, and all the great cities in the world, inſtead of being the ſeats of elegance, would degenerate into ſinks of corruption.

At *ſea*, the winds ſwell the mariner's ſails, and ſpeed his courſe along the watery way; ſpeed it far more effectually than a thouſand rowers, bending to their ſtrokes, and tugging at the oar.—By *land*, they perform the office of an immenſe ſeedman, and ſcatter abroad the reproductive principles of a multitude of plants; which, though the ſtaff of life to many animals, are too ſmall for the management, or too mean for the attention of man.--*HE bringeth the winds out of his treaſuries*, †, is a very juſt obſervation, whether it

* The *Hebrew* words, which convey the idea of gentle *rain*, ſignify a portion of water, made ſmall as a *hair*, or divided into *millions* of parts, מטר עשים Deut. xxxii. 2.
† Job xxxvi. 28. ‡ Mark iv. 33. ‖ Exod. x. 21. † Pſ. cxxxv. 7.

it relate to GOD's absolute and uncontroulable dominion over this most potent meteor, or to its welcome and salutary influence * on all the face of nature.

Here are *lightnings* stationed. Though dormant at present, they are in act to spring, and launch the livid flame; whenever their piercing flash is necessary to destroy the *sulphureous* vapours; or dislodge any other *noxious* matter, which might be prejudicial to the delicate temperature of the æther, and obscure its more than crystalline transparency.

Above all is situate a *radiant* and *majestic* orb, which enlightens the tracts, chears the inhabitants, and colours all the productions of this habitable globe. While the air, by a singular address in managing the rays, amplifies their usefulness; its *reflecting* power † augments that heat, which is the life of nature; its *refracting* power prolongs that splendor, which is the beauty of

* *Quam salutares autem dedit, quam tempestivos non modo hominum, sed etiam pecudum generi, iis denique omnibus quæ oriuntur a terra, ventos? quorum flatu nimii temperantur calores, ubiisdem etiam maritimi cursus celeres et certi diriguntur.* De nat. Deor. lib. II.

† The air is a curious *cover*, which, without oppressing the inhabitants of the earth with any perceivable weight, confines, reflects, and thereby *increases* the vivifying heat of the sun. The air increases this kindly heat, much in the same manner as our garments by day, or bed-cloaths by night, give additional warmth to our bodies.—Whereas, when the æreal vestment grows thin, or, to speak more philosophically, when the air becomes less in quantity, and more *attenuated* in quality, the solar warmth is very sensibly diminished. Travellers on the lofty mountains of *America* sometimes experience, to their terrible cost, the truth of this observation. Though the clime, at the foot of those prodigious hills, is even hot and sultry; yet, on their summits, the cold rages with such excessive severity, that it is no unusual calamity, for the horse and his rider to be frozen to death.—We have therefore great reason to bless the supreme DISPOSER of things, for placing us in the *commodious* concavity, or rather under the *cherishing* wings of an atmosphere.

of the creation.—These emanations of light, though formed of inactive matter, yet (astonishing apparatus of almighty wisdom!) are refined almost to the *subtilty* of spirit, and are scarce inferior even to thought in *speed*. By which means, they spread themselves, with a kind of instantaneous swiftness, through the circumference of a whole hemisphere; and though they fill, where-ever they pervade, yet they straiten no place, embarrass no one, encumber nothing.

These give the diamond its brilliancy, and the velvet its gloss: to these the chearful eye is obliged for its lively sparkle, and the modest cheek for its rosy blush. These, attending the judicious touches of the pencil, bid the drapery flow, and the embodied figure arise; bid the countenance wear the calm serenity of thought, or be agitated with the wild transports of passion.—Without this circumstance of *colour*, we should want all the entertainments of vision, and be at a loss to distinguish one thing from another. We should hesitate to pronounce, and must take a little journey to determine, whether yonder inclosure contains a piece of pasturage, or a plot of arable land. We should question, and could not very expeditiously resolve, whether the next person we meet, be a soldier in his regimentals, or a swain in his holiday suit? a bride in her ornaments, or a widow in her weeds? But colour, like a particular livery, characterizes the class, to which every individual belongs. It is the *label*, which indicates, upon the first inspection, its respective quality. It is the *ticket*, which guides our choice, and directs our hand *.

We have cursorily surveyed the *upper-rooms* of our great habitation, and taken a turn along the *ground-floor*;

* This, I believe, suggests the true sense of those noble metaphors, used by the divine speaker, *It is turned as clay to the seal, and they stand as a garment: it*, the earth, and all its productions, receive, from the rising sun, both colour and beauty.

floor; if we descend into the subterraneous lodgments, the *cellars* of the stately structure, we shall there also find the most exquisite contrivance acting in concert with the most profuse goodness.—Here are various *minerals*, of sovereign efficacy in medicine; which rectify the vitiated blood, and quicken the languid spirits; which often rekindle the fading bloom in the virgin's complexion, and reinvigorate the enfeebled arm of manhood.—Here are beds fraught with *metals* of the richest value. From hence come the golden treasures, from hence the silver stores, which are the very life of traffic; and circulate through the body politic, as the vital fluid through the animal frame: which, in the refining hand of charity, are feet to the lame, and eyes to the blind, and make the widow's heart sing for joy.—Here are mines, which yield a metal of meaner aspect, but of a firmer cohesion, and of superior usefulness: A metal, that constitutes almost all the implements with which Art executes her various designs. Without the assistance of *iron*, trade would be reduced to the lowest ebb; commerce would feel her wings clipped; and every species of mechanic skill, either utterly fail, or be miserably baffled. Without the assistance of iron, it would be almost impossible to rear the steady mast, to display the daring canvas, or drop the faithful anchor. Destitute of this ever-needful commodity, we should have no plough to furrow the soil, no shuttle to traverse the loom,

beauty. Just as the soft clay, and the melting wax, receive an elegant impression from the seal.—*They* (the morning and the day-spring, mentioned in a preceding verse) *stand as a garment;* they act the part of a magnificent and universal cloathing; give all visible objects, their comely aspect, and graceful distinctions. *Job* xxxviii. 14.

What bold and fine images are here!—The *sea* had been described as an *infant*, changeable, froward, and impetuous, with thick darkness for its swaddling-band. The *light* is represented as an *handmaid*, attending to *dress* the creation; and executing the CREATOR's orders, with a *punctuality* that never fails, with a *speed* that cannot be equalled.

loom, ſcarce any ornament for polite, or any utenſil for ordinary life.

Here is an inexhauſted fund of *combuſtible* materials‡, which ſupply the whole nation with fewel. Theſe preſent their miniſtrations in the kitchen; and yielding themſelves as aliment to the flame, render our food both palatable and healthy.—Theſe offer their ſervice at the forge; and, with their piercing heat, mollify the moſt ſtubborn bars, till they become pliant to the ſtroke of the hammer.—The *coals* pour themſelves likewiſe into the glaſs-houſes. They rage, amidſt thoſe aſtoniſhing furnaces, with irreſiſtible but uſeful fierceneſs. They liquify even the obdurate flint, and make the moſt rigid ſubſtances far more ductile than the ſofteſt clay, or the melting wax; make them obſequious, not only to the lighteſt touch, but to the impreſſions of our very breath.

By this means, we are furniſhed, and from the coarſeſt ingredients, with the moſt curious, beautiful, and ſerviceable manufacture in the world: A manufacture, which tranſmits the light and warmth of the ſun into our houſes; yet excludes the annoyance of the rains, and the violence of the winds. Which gives *new eyes* to decrepit age, and vaſtly *more enlarged* views to philoſophy and ſcience; which leads up the aſtronomer's diſcernment, even to the *Satellites* of *Saturn:* and carries down the naturaliſt's obſervation, as far as the animalcule race; bringing near what is immenſely remote, and making viſible what, to our unaſſiſted ſight, would be abſolutely imperceptible.

We have alſo, when the ſun withdraws his ſhining, an expedient to ſupply his place. We can create an *artificial*

‡ *As for the earth*, ſays *Job*, *out of it cometh bread:* corn, vegetables, and whatever is good for food, ſpring from its ſurface, While *under it is turned up as it were fire:* its lower parts מחת its deeper ſtrata, yield combuſtible materials; which are eaſily enkindled into fire, and adminiſter the moſt ſubſtantial fewel for the flame. *Job* xxviii. 5.

artificial day in our rooms, and prolong our ſtudies, or purſue our buſineſs, under its chearing influence. With beaming tapers and ruddy fires, we *chaſe* the darkneſs, and *mitigate* * the cold; we cheriſh converſation, and cultivate the ſocial ſpirit. We render thoſe very intervals of time, ſome of the moſt delightful portions of our life, which otherwiſe would be a joyleſs and unimproving void.

Theſe obſcure caverns are the birth-place of the moſt ſparkling *gems*: which, when nicely poliſhed, and prodigal of their luſtre, ſtand candidates for a place on the royal crown, or a ſeat on the *virtuous* fair one's breaſt: and, I will not with our men of gallantry ſay, emulate the living brilliancy of her eyes; but ſerve as a foil, to ſet off the lovelineſs and excellency of her accompliſhed mind, and amiable converſation; *whoſe price*,

* I can hardly forbear tranſcribing the grateful and pious remark, which *Socrates* makes on this occaſion. Demonſtrating, from the advantageous and benign conſtitution of things, GOD's indulgent care for mankind, he aſks, Το δι ὑ το πυρ πορισασθαι, ἑτικηρον μεν ψυχος, ἑτικηρον δε σκοτος, συνεργον δε προς πασαν τεχνην, ὑ πανθ' οσα ωφελιας ἑνεκα ανθρωποι καλασκευαζονται, Ως γαρ συνειλονθ' εἰπειν, ναῦν αξιολογον ανευ πυρος ανδρωποι των προ βιον χρησιμων καλασκευαζονται. To which his pupil very intelligently replies, Τερπαλλειν, τελο φιλανθρωπια. *Vid.* Socrat. *Memor.* lib. IV. A work, which may be ranked among the *fineſt* remains of antiquity *Equal*, 'tis acknowledged, to any of the ancient compoſitions, in purity of ſtyle, and dignity of ſentiment. *Superior*, I think, to them all, for the artful, delicate, and happy manner of conveying inſtruction.

I wiſh, the author of the preceding dialogues had been better acquainted with the *Socratic* method; and I could wiſh, that young ſtudents for the miniſtry would adopt the ſkill of this *Heathen* philoſopher. Perhaps, no qualification of human growth, would more effectually contribute to render them, what St *Paul* ſtyles διδακτικος—It ſeems to be the moſt *inſinuating* and *ſucceſsful* way both to convince and inſtruct. Nay, it convinces the opponent out of his own mouth, and makes the pupil inſtruct himſelf. It is what the TEACHER learnt from GOD, practiſed in thoſe incomparable ſketches of obliging and moſt ſelf-addreſs, the parables of the *two debtors*, and of the *good Samaritan*. Luke vii. 41. Luke x. 30.

price, according to the unerring eſtimate of inſpiration, is ſuperior to ſapphires, *is far above rubies* *.

Here are *quarries*, ſtocked with ſtones, inferior in beauty to the jeweller's ware, but much more eminently beneficial: which, when properly ranged, and cemented with a tenacious mortar, form the convenient abodes of peace, and build the ſtrongeſt fortifications of war; defending us from the inclemencies of the weather, and the more formidable aſſaults of our enemies. Theſe conſtitute the arches of the bridge, which convey the traveller, with perfect ſecurity, over the deep and rapid ſtream. Theſe ſtrengthen the arms, the ſtupendous arms, of the mole; which ſtretch themſelves far into the ocean, break the impetuoſity of the ſurge, and ſcreen the bark from tempeſtuous ſeas.—Theſe ſtony treaſures are comparatively *ſoft*, while they continue in the bowels of the earth; but acquire an increaſing *hardneſs*, when expoſed to the open air. Was this remarkable peculiarity reverſed, what difficulties would attend the labours of the maſon? His materials could not be extracted from their bed, nor faſhioned for his purpoſe, without infinite toil. Were his work completed, it could not long withſtand the fury of the elements; but inſenſibly mouldering, or inceſſantly decaying, would elude the expectations of the owner; perhaps, might prove an immature grave, inſtead of a durable dwelling.

Here are various aſſortments or vaſt *layers* of *clay*: which, however contemptible in its appearance, is abundantly more advantageous, than the rocks of diamond, or the veins of gold. This is moulded, with great expedition and eaſe, into veſſels of any ſhape, and of almoſt every ſize. Some ſo delicately *fine*, that they compoſe the moſt elegant and ornamental furniture, for the tea-table of a princeſs. Others ſo remarkably *cheap*, that they are ranged on the ſhelves, and miniſter at the meals, of the pooreſt peaſant.

* Prov. xxxi. 10.

All so perfectly *neat*, that no liquid takes the least taint, nor the nicest palate any disgust, from their cleanly services.

A multiplicity of other valuable stores, are locked up, by Providence, in those ample vaults. The *key* of all is committed to the management of *industry;* with free permission to produce each particular species, as necessity shall demand, or prudence direct.

Which shall we most admire, the bountiful heart, the liberal hand, or the all-discerning eye of our great CREATOR? How observable and admirable is his *precaution*, in removing these useful but cumbrous wares, from the superficies; and stowing them, in proper repositories, beneath the ground!—Were they scattered over the surface of the soil, the earth would be *embarrassed* with the enormous load. Our roads would be blocked up, and scarce any portion left free for the operations of husbandry.—Were they buried extremely deep, or sunk to the centre of the globe, it would cost us immense pains to procure them; or rather, they would be quite *inaccessible*.—Were they uniformly spread into a pavement for nature; the trees could not strike their roots, nor the herbs shoot their blades, but universal *sterility* must ensue.—Whereas, by their present disposition, they furnish us with a magazine of metallic, without causing any diminution of our vegetable treasures. Fossils of every splendid and serviceable kind enrich the *bowels*, while bloom and verdure embellish the *face* of the earth.

So judicious is the arrangement of this grand edifice! so beneficent the destination of its whole * furniture! in which, all is regulated with consummate skill, and touched into the highest perfection. All most exactly

* No notice is taken of the *ocean*, in this little *rent-roll* of nature's wealth; because a distinct sketch is given of that grand receptacle and its principal services, in LETTER IX.

exactly adapted to the various intentions of Providence, and the manifold exigencies of mankind; to supply *every want* we can feel; and gratify *every wish* we can form.

Insomuch that the whole system affords a favourite and exalted topic of praise, even to those distinguished beings, who *stand on the sea of glass, and have the harps of GOD in their hands*. They lift their voice and sing, *Great and marvellous are thy works, O LORD GOD almighty* *!—And is there not reason, my *Aspasio* would say, infinite reason, for *us* to join this triumphant choir; and add gratitude to our wonder, love to our Halielujahs? Since all these things are to us, not merely objects of contemplation, but sources of accommodation; not only a majestic spectacle, bright with the display of our CREATOR's wisdom, but an inestimable gift, rich with the emanations of his goodness. The earth hath he *set before* the inhabitants of glory, but *the earth hath he given to the children of men* †.—Having given us ourselves; given us a world; has he not a right, a most unquestionable and unrivalled right, to make that tender demand, *My son, give me thy heart* ‡?

Shall I add another passage, which, viewed with any but the last paragraph, will be like *the head of gold*, eminent and conspicuous on *feet of iron and clay*? It is taken from the finest philosophical oration that ever was

* *Rev.* xv. 3. *Great and marvellous are thy works, O LORD GOD almighty! just and true are thy ways, thou KING of saints!* The first part seems to mean, what the inspired writer calls, *the song of Moses*. The second contains, what he styles, *the song of the LAMB*. The first, I should imagine, relates to the stupendous works of creation. The second alludes to the far more wonderful scheme of redemption. The former, describing the system of nature, is recorded by *Moses*; the latter, comprehending the salvation of the saints, is accomplished by *CHRIST*.

† Psal. cxv. 16. ‡ Prov. xxiii. 26.

was made. I never read it, but with a glow of delight, and with impreſſions of awe. It is, in ſhort, inimitably ſpirited and ſublime.—You think, perhaps, I act an impolitic part, in being ſo laviſh of my praiſe; and that the quotation muſt ſuffer, by ſuch an *aggrandizing* introduction. But I am under no apprehenſions of this kind. Forbear to be delighted, if you can; ceaſe to admire, if you can, when you hear OMNISCIENCE itſelf declaring, that, on the ſight of this univerſal fabric, emerging out of nothing, THE MORNING-STARS SANG TOGETHER, AND ALL THE SONS OF GOD SHOUTED FOR JOY *.—The ſyſtem was ſo graceful, ſo magnificent, and, in all reſpects, ſo exquiſitely finiſhed, that the moſt exalted intelligencies were charmed, were tranſported. They knew not how to expreſs themſelves on the great occaſion, but in ſhouts of exultation, and ſongs of praiſe. Is it poſſible for imagination to conceive an encomium ſo juſt, ſo high, ſo beautifully noble?—I am ſure, after ſo much delicacy, and majeſty of ſentiment, any thing of mine muſt be intollerably flat; unleſs you will except this one profeſſion, that I am, with the moſt cordial ſincerity,

My dear Aſpaſio,

Inviolably yours,

THERON.

* Job xxxviii. 7.

LETTER VII.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

My dear THERON,

IF you write with ſuch a view, and from ſuch a motive, as are mentioned in your laſt, expect no more

more *free-will* offerings from my pen. In this one inſtance, I ſhall think it my duty to be covetous. I ſhall act the miſer out of principle; and hardly perſuade myſelf to part with a ſingle line, till it is become an undeniable *debt*. I muſt turn your own artifice on yourſelf; and lay you under a neceſſity of obliging, entertaining, and edifying me by your correſpondence.

For give me leave to aſſure you, that I am always delighted, and always improved by your epiſtles. They ſhew me a multitude of beauties in the creation, which I ſhould not otherwiſe have diſcerned. They point out the infinite power, the unſearchable wiſdom, and the charmingly-rich goodneſs of the glorious MAKER. Such a philoſophy turns all nature into a *ſchool* of inſtruction, and is an excellent *handmaid* to true religion. It makes every object a ſtep, better than a golden ſtep, to raiſe both our knowledge and our affections to the adorable and immortal CAUSE of all.

While I am roving heedleſsly along, your remarks often interpoſe, like ſome intelligent faithful monitor, who claps his hand upon my breaſt, and ſays, *Stand ſtill, and conſider the wondrous works of GOD* *.— Willingly I obey the admonition: the *Chriſtian* may, with peculiar complacency, conſider this grand magazine of wonders, this copious ſtore-houſe of bleſſings; and, conſcious of an intereſt in *JESUS*, has a right to call them all *his own* ‡. He may look round upon preſent things; look forward unto future things; and, truſting in his SAVIOUR's merit, may confidently ſay,—"Not one only, but *both* theſe "worlds are mine. By virtue of my REDEEM-"er's righteouſneſs, I poſſeſs the neceſſary accom-"modations of this life; and, on the ſame unſhaken "footing, I ſtand, entitled to the inconceivable fe-"licity of a better."

Surely then it will be as pleaſing an employ, and as important a ſearch, to examine the *validity* of our *title*

† Job xxxvii. 14. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 2.

tle to future things, as to eſtimate the value of our preſent poſſeſſions. *You* have executed the one, let *me* attempt the other.—You have ſurveyed material nature. It appears to be a fair and ſtately manſion; void of all defect; and, for the purpoſes which it is intended to anſwer, completely finiſhed. Is not our SAVIOUR's obedience, the proviſion made for indigent and guilty ſouls, equally rich and equally perfect? —Since this is everlaſting and immutable; ſince the other is tranſient and periſhable; doubtleſs we may argue with the judicious apoſtle; *If that which is to be done away*, which will ſoon be conſigned over to diſſolution, *is glorious; much more that which remaineth*, whoſe bleſſed effects continue to eternal ages, *is glorious* *.

We are every one *as an unclean thing* †. Our very nature is contaminated. Even ſanctification, tho' it deſtroys the reigning, does not wholly ſuperſede the polluting power of iniquity. So that whatever graces we exerciſe, whatever duties we perform, (like the rays of light tranſmitted thro' coloured glaſs, or like generous wine ſtreaming from a defiled caſk,) they receive ſome improper tinge, or contract ſome debaſing taint. But *CHRIST* was entirely free from this *innate* contagion. He had no erroneous apprehenſions in his mind, no corrupt bias upon his will, nor any irregular concupiſcence in his affections.

Being thus perfectly undefiled, *he did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth* ‡. All his thoughts were innocent, all his words were irreproachable, and every action blameleſs. The moſt accompliſhed among the children of men, when ſurpriſed in ſome unguarded moment, or aſſaulted on ſome weak ſide, have been betrayed into error, or hurried into ſin. Even *Moſes*, ſpake unadviſedly with his lips; and *Aaron*, the ſaint of the LORD, warped to idolatrous practices. *They* were like ſome ſtagnating *lake;* in which, the dregs being

* 2 Cor. iii. 11. † Iſ. lxiv. 6. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 22.

ing subsided, the waters appear clean; but when stirred by temptation, or agitated by affliction, the sediment rises, and the pool is discoloured. Whereas, *CHRIST* may be compared to a *fountain*, that is all transparency, and pure to the very bottom; which, however shaken, however disturbed, is nothing but fluid crystal; permanently and invariably clear.

It was a small thing for the blessed *JESUS*, to have no depraved propensity; he was born in a state of *consummate rectitude*, and adorned with all the beauties of holiness. HOLINESS TO THE LORD was inscribed, not on the *mitre*, but on the *heart* of our great HIGH PRIEST. Therefore he is styled, by the angelic harbinger of his birth, THAT HOLY THING *.—In the prophecy of *Zechariah*, the dignity of our REDEEMER's nature, and the perfection of his obedience, are displayed by the similitude of a *stone* †, adorned with exquisite engraving: wrought, not by *Bezaleel* or *Aholiab*, though divinely-inspired artists, but by the finger of JEHOVAH himself; and more highly finished, than it is possible for human skill to equal, or human thought to conceive.

The whole tenor of our LORD's conduct, was a living exemplification of piety and morality, in their most *extensive* branches, and most *amiable* forms. Saints of the highest attainments, have fallen short of the glory

* *Luke* i. 35.—Which is spoken, in *contradistinction* to the state of all other births; and implies the *universal* prevalence of original corruption, this *one* instance only excepted. For, if other infants were holy at their first formation, and made after the image of GOD, this remark had been trivial and impertinent, if not droll and burlesque; like saying with great solemnity, "The child shall have a mouth and a head; aye, "and eyes in the one, and lips to the other."

† *Zech.* iii. 9. *Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon one stone shall be seven eyes; behold! I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.*

glory of GOD; have been far from reaching the exalted ſtandard of his precepts. But *CHRIST* failed in no point, came ſhort in no degree.—We formerly obſerved the great ſublimity, and vaſt extent of the divine law. From whence appears the extreme difficulty, nay the utter impoſſibility of our juſtification, on account of any duties performed by ourſelves. How ſhould we rejoice then to contemplate the vicarious righteouſneſs of our condeſcending and adorable SURETY? As the mercy-ſeat was exactly commenſurate to the dimenſions of the ark; ſo did our LORD's obedience moſt *fully quadrate* with all and every demand of the divine law. It flowed from thoſe beſt of principles, ſupreme love to GOD, and unfeigned affection to mankind.

From theſe two capital ſources, let us trace our LORD's obedience, through ſome little part of its illuſtrious progreſs.—His delight in GOD was conſpicuous, even from his *early* years. The ſacred ſolemnities of the ſanctuary, were more engaging to his youthful mind, than all the entertainments of a feſtival.—When he entered upon his miniſtry, *whole nights* were not too long for his copious devotions. The lonely retirements of the deſert, as affording opportunity for undiſturbed communion with GOD, were more deſirable to *CHRIST*, than the applauſes of an admiring world.

So ceaſeleſs and tranſcendent was his love to GOD, that he never ſought any ſecret pleaſure of his own; but always did thoſe things which were pleaſing in his FATHER's ſight. His own will was entirely abſorpt in the will of the MOST HIGH; and *it was his meat and drink*, refreſhing and delightful as the richeſt food, or as royal dainties, *to finiſh the work that was given him to do* *.

So entirely devoted to the honour of GOD, that a zeal

* John iv. 34.

a zeal for his houſe, and for the purity of his ordinances, is repreſented, by the evangelical hiſtorian, as *eating him up* *. Like a heavenly flame glowing in his breaſt, it ſometimes fired him with a graceful indignation; ſometimes melted him into godly ſorrow; and, by exerting itſelf in a variety of vigorous efforts, conſumed his vital ſpirits.

So active and unremitted was the obedience of the bleſſed *JESUS*, that the ſun did not enter upon his race with a more conſtant aſſiduity, nor diſpatch his buſineſs with greater expedition: and ſure I am, that radiant luminary never diſpenſed beams half ſo bright, or a thouſandth part ſo beneficial.——Short was his ſpan, but how grand and extenſive were his ſervices! So *grand*, that they bring more glory to GOD, than all the adminiſtrations of Providence, and all the phænomena of nature. So *extenſive*, that they ſpread, in their gracious efficacy, to the ends of the earth, and to the cloſing period of time. Nay, they will diffuſe their bleſſed influence even to the celeſtial world, and have no other limits of their duration than the ages of eternity.

Moſt affectionately concerned for the welfare of mankind, he ſpent his ſtrength, not barely in relieving them, when his aid was implored; but in *ſeeking* the afflicted, and *offering* his aſſiſtance. With great fatigue †, he travelled to remote cities; and with no

* John ii. 17.

† *JESUS being* weary *with his journey*, κεκοπιακως, John iv. 6.—κοπος is thus explained by a *Greek* commentator, αγαλος, ἡ ου ἰσχυς. Our LORD ſat down, *without ceremony* and *without complaint*, even on the rough place: contented to uſe it, juſt as he found it; neither deſiring a ſofter ſeat, nor wiſhing for any better accommodation.—I rather think, the adverb refers to the preceding adjective κεκοπιακως, which ſignifies a ſtate of very great fatigue; weakening a perſon to ſuch a degree, that he can hardly walk with *ſteady* ſteps, or even ſit in an *upright* attitude. The ſacred hiſtorian ſeems to mean, that our LORD ſat in ſuch a poſture, as ſpoke the laſſitude of his body: declared

leſs condeſcenſion, he viſited the meaneſt villages, that all might have the benefit and comfort of his preſence. Though multitudes of miſerable objects were brought to him from every quarter, yet he was pleaſed even to prevent the wiſhes of the diſtreſſed, and *went about doing good.*

He gave ſight *, and all the agreeable ſcenes of nature, to the blind; health, and all the choice comforts of life, to the diſeaſed. He expelled malevolent raging dæmons; and reſtored, what is more precious than the light of the body, or the vigour of the conſtitution, the calm poſſeſſion of the intellectual faculties.—What *greatly ſurpaſſed* all the preceding bleſſings, he releaſed the wretched ſoul from the dominion of darkneſs, and from the tyranny of ſin. He made his followers partakers of a divine nature, and prepared them for a ſtate of never-ending bliſs.

Such priceleſs treaſures of wiſdom and beneficence flowed from his tongue, and were poured from his hands!—How different theſe triumphs of mercy, from the trophies erected, by wild ambition, in the bloody field! If *Heathens* celebrated thoſe mighty butchers, who made cities their ſlaughter-houſe; made half the globe their ſhambles; and meaſured their merit, by the devaſtations they ſpread: how ſhould *Chriſtians* admire this heavenly BENEFACTOR, who roſe upon a wretched world, with healing under his wings! who diſtributed, far and near, the unſpeakably-rich gifts of knowledge and holineſs, of temporal happineſs and eternal joy!

Nor

clared the failure of his ſpirits; and *ſhewed* him to be ſpent with the heat of the day, and the toil of travelling. Which circumſtance gives a moſt beautiful *heightening* to his charity and zeal, ſo generouſly and ſo ſucceſsfully exerted in the following conference.

* Εχαρισατ το βλεπειν, is the delicate and noble expreſſion of the evangeliſt, *Luke* vii. 21. *He made them a preſent of ſight.* Silver and gold had he none; but theſe were his gifts, ſuch were his alms.

Nor were these righteous acts his strange work, but his *repeated*, his *hourly*, his almost-*incessant* employ. Sometimes we hear him preaching in the temple, or publishing his glad tidings in the synagogues. Sometimes we see him teaching in private houses, or bringing forth the good things of his gospel on the deck of a ship. At other times, he takes a mountain for his pulpit; the heavens are his sounding-board; and *all that have ears to hear*, are invited to be his audience. —Does he lay aside this solemn office? It is only to carry on the same design, in a more condescending and *familiar* manner. If he meets with the *Pharisees*, he discovers their errors, and reproves their vices; he confutes their objections, and (in case they are not absolutely inaccessible to wise counsel) rectifies their mistakes. If he vouchsafes to be present at a feast, he furnishes the richest, incomparably the richest part of the treat. *Honey and milk are under his tongue* *. He inculcates lowliness of mind on the vain†; he recommends disinterested charity to the selfish‡; and promises pardon to the weeping penitent ‖.—Is he retired from *other* company, and surrounded only by his chosen attendants? His conversation is a sermon. Whether he sit in the inner chamber, or travel on the public road, or walk through the corn-fields, he is still prosecuting his great work; training up his disciples for their sacred function; and imparting to them, what they may communicate to others.—Is he retired from *all* company? Even then he does not discontinue his labours of love, but adds the fervent intercessions of the night, to the charitable toils of the day. Yes, when all but himself lay sunk in soft repose, this ADVOCATE for a guilty world was engaged in an exercise of benevolence; which, though secret and unobserved as the falling dews, was far more beneficial to our best interests, than those pearly drops to the languishing herbs.

Most

* Cant. iv. 11.
† Luke xiv. 8.
‡ Luke xiv. 12.
‖ Luke vii. 48.

Moſt charming and unparalleled benignity! He *forgot* his daily food, *neglected* his neceſſary reſt, to ſpend and be ſpent for the ſalvation of mankind. Neither the hardſhips of continual ſelf-denial, nor the calumnies of envenomed tongues, could divert him from purſuing this favourite buſineſs.—He ſought none of your honours, coveted none of your rewards, O ye children of men! What *he* ſought, what *he* coveted, was, to wear out his life in your ſervice, and lay it down for your ranſom. This was all his deſire, and this indeed he deſired earneſtly.——He longed (beneficent, bleſſed BEING!) he longed for the fatal hour. He ſeverely rebuked one of his diſciples, who would have diſſuaded him from going as a volunteer to the croſs. He was even *ſtraitened* *, under a kind of holy uneaſineſs, till the dreadful work was accompliſhed; till he was *baptized with the baptiſm of his ſufferings*, bathed in blood, and plunged in death.

By this moſt meritorious obedience and death, what did he not *deſerve?* what did he not *procure?* He procured thoſe ineſtimable bleſſings, the pardon of ſin, and reconciliation with GOD; procured them (O! love unmerited and unmeaſurable!) for prodigals, for traitors, for rebels.—To this it is owing, that we, who were enemies againſt GOD, may call the KING of heaven our Father; may have free acceſs to him in all

* *Luke* xii. 50. The original word συνεχομαι ſeems to expreſs the condition of a perſon wedged in, on every ſide, by a tumultuous throng of people. His hands are hampered, and his body is confined in a moving priſon: he is cruſhed, and hurried to and fro: he pants for breath, and is almoſt ſtifled in the croud.—How muſt ſuch a one long to be *diſengaged* from theſe *very uneaſy* circumſtances! With equal ardour did our moſt beneficent LORD deſire thoſe ſufferings, which were to overwhelm him with diſtreſs, but exalt *us* to happineſs; were to bathe his limbs in blood, but cleanſe our ſouls from ſin.—Ο ἀχλος, ſays the ſame hiſtorian, συνεχυσε σε ἀποθλιβουσι, *Luke* viii. 45.

all our difficulties; and may hope to reign with him in everlasting glory.

Was ever goodness like this goodness*? Were ever blessings comparable to these blessings; or purchased with such a price?—Hide, hide your diminished heads, ye little transitory donations of silver and gold. The riches of a thousand mines, bestowed to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, are the most contemptible trifles, if mentioned with the charity of the *teaching*, the *healing*, the *bleeding* JESUS. Kingdoms given away in alms, if viewed with this infinitely-noble beneficence, would make just the same figure, as a spark from the summer-hearth, under the potent and boundless blaze of noon.—This is indeed *love that passeth knowledge*†.

Amidst

* *Codrus*, it is true, devoted himself to death for the *Athenians;* and *Curtius* threw himself into the yawning gulf, for the preservation of the *Romans*.—But these died, being *mere* creatures, and *guilty* creatures: whereas the dying JESUS was perfectly innocent, and supremely glorious.—These died only a *little before* their time: but CHRIST died, though he had life in himself, and none could have taken it from him, had he not voluntarily resigned it.—These died for their valuable *friends*, for their affectionate *relations*, for their native *country:* but CHRIST died for slaves, for enemies, for the ungodly.—They died an *honourable* death: but CHRIST submitted to the most *ignominious* execution; CHRIST died under the imputation of *horrid* crimes, and in the form of an *execrable* malefactor.—In all these instances, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so is CHRIST's love greater than their love: his *philanthropy* than their *patriotism*.

† *Eph.* iii. 19. This expression, as also the *principal* circumstance of superiority hinted in the preceding note, are founded on the *divinity* of our LORD. And indeed the expression is scarce justifiable, the assertion is hardly true, upon any other supposition. A creature dying for a creature, is, tho' great, yet not *incomprehensible* goodness. But, when we view the sufferings of CHRIST, and the blessings of redemption surrounded with all the splendor of the DEITY; they dazzle

Amidſt all theſe miracles of power and of love, (any one of which would have entitled him to univerſal admiration, and everlaſting honour,) how *humble* was our SAVIOUR! O humility—virtue dear to the moſt high GOD, and peculiarly amiable in men—never didſt thou appear in ſo charming a dreſs, or ſo ſtriking a light.

At his birth, not accommodated with a magnificent *palace*, but lodged in a ſtable, and laid in a manger.—As he advanced in years, not attended with a *royal* equipage, or ſupplied from a *royal* revenue; but labouring with his own hands, and earning his bread by the ſweat of his brow.—When he entered upon his miniſterial office, not the leaſt oſtentatious *parade* appeared in the performance of all his wonderful works. So far, ſo very far from affecting the acclamations of the populace, that he often impoſed ſilence on thoſe unſpeakably-indebted lips, which were ready to overflow with praiſe, and would fain have been the trumpets of his fame.

Though a voice from heaven proclaimed him the BELOVED of his almighty FATHER; he diſdained not to own the ignoble character of the *carpenter's* ſon *. Though PRINCE of the kings of the earth, he condeſcended to waſh the feet of mean fiſhermen, and vile ſinners †. Though PROPRIETOR and LORD of the whole world, he was content to be more deſtitute than the fowls of the air, or the foxes of the deſart ‡; more deſtitute (aſtoniſhing abaſement!) than the moſt *inſignificant* and moſt *hated* animals.

Grandeur, we find, is apt to beget expectations of ſuperior regard; conſequently, gives a keener edge to

dazzle our underſtanding, and fill us with holy aſtoniſhment. They appear to be the effects of a love, never to be ſpoke of but in the language of *wonder*, never to be thought of but with an extaſy of *delight*.

* Matth. xiii. 55. † John xiii. 14. ‡ Matth. viii. 20.

to every affront, and renders the mind more tenderly sensible of every disrespect. But our LORD's *meekness* was as great as his dignity; and that throughout a series of such *unsufferable* provocations, as were equalled by nothing, but the sweetness of his forgiving grace.

When rudely affronted, he calmly bore, and kindly overlooked the insult.—When contradicted by *petulent* and *presumptuous* sinners, he endured, with the utmost serenity of temper, their unreasonable cavils, and their obstinate perverseness.—When his invitations, his most endearing invitations, were ungratefully and stubbornly rejected; instead of remitting, he renewed them; and, with still warmer affection, importuned his hearers, not to forsake *their own* mercies, nor to forego *their own* felicity.—When all the winning arts of persuasion were ineffectual, he added his tears to his slighted intreaties; and lamented as a brother, when scornfully repulsed as a teacher.

Though *his disciples* slept, stupidly slept, when his bitter cries pierced the clouds, and were enough to awaken the very stones into compassion; did their divine but slighted MASTER resent the unkindness? Did he refuse to admit an excuse for their neglect? yea he made their excuse; and that the most tender and gracious imaginable; *The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak* *.—When *his enemies* had nailed him to the cross, as the basest slave, and most flagitious malefactor; when they were glutting their malice with his torments and blood; and spared not to revile him, even in his last expiring agonies; far, very far from being exasperated, this HERO of heaven repaid all their contempt and barbarity, with the most fervent and effectual supplications in their behalf. *FATHER, forgive them*, was his prayer: *for they know not what they do* †, was his plea.

Nor was his *resignation* less exemplary than his meekness.

* Matth. xxvi. 41. † Luke xxiii. 34.

neſs. He went out to meet afflictions, when they came in his FATHER's name, and commiſſioned from his FATHER's hand. He gave, without the leaſt reluctance, his back to the ſmiters, and hid not his face from ſhame and ſpitting. Though his ſoul, his very ſoul was penetrated with the keeneſt ſenſations of anguiſh; yet no impatient thought diſcompoſed his mind, no murmuring word forced its way from his lips. *FATHER, not my will, but thine be done* *, was his language, when the ſorrows of death compaſſed him, and pains, inexpreſſibly ſeverer than the pains of diſſolution, came upon him. *When they gaped upon him with their mouth, and ſmote him upon the cheek reproachfully. When his face was foul with ſpitting, and on his eyelids was the ſhadow of death. When GOD delivered him to the ungodly, and turned him over into the hands of the wicked. Yea, when the ALMIGHTY ſet him for the mark of his arrows, and brake him with breach upon breach. When the weapons of his wrath cleft his very reins aſunder, and poured his gall upon the earth* †. Amidſt all this exquiſite diſtreſs, he ſinned not by the leaſt irregular perturbation; but bowed his head, and dutifully kiſſed the divine rod, and cordially bleſſed his very murderers.

Thus did the whole choir of *active* and *paſſive* virtues abound and ſhine in our LORD; abound with the richeſt variety, and ſhine with the higheſt luſtre: infinitely ſurpaſſing that curious aſſemblage of coſtly gems,

* Luke xxii. 42.

† Theſe tragical images are borrowed from the book of *Job*, who was an eminent type of a ſuffering SAVIOUR; and though they are the very eloquence of wo, they do not exaggerate, they cannot expreſs, that inconceivable anguiſh, which wrung a bloody ſweat from our bleſſed MASTER's body, and forced from his lips that melancholy exclamation,—*My ſoul is ſorrowful,—exceeding ſorrowful,—ſorrowful even unto death.* See *Job* xvi.

gems, which ſtudded the *Aaronic* breaſt-plate*; and, as far as earthly things can repreſent heavenly, typified the ſplendor and perfection of our REDEEMER's righteouſneſs.

In all this, he acted and he ſuffered, as GOD's *righteous ſervant*, and as his people's *righteous ſurety*.—By all this, he fulfilled every jot and tittle of the divine law; nay, he more than fulfilled, he *magnified* it. He gave it (if I may apply the moſt beautiful alluſion that ever was uſed, to the moſt momentous ſubject that ever was diſcuſſed) *good meaſure, preſſed down, and ſhaken together, and running over*†.

He defied the moſt vigilant of his enemies to convince him of ſin.—A more malignant, a far more ſagacious adverſary than the ſcribes and Phariſees, could detect no blemiſh in our *LORD JESUS. The prince of this world*, that infernal tyrant, who had deceived and enſlaved all the nations of the earth, *came and found nothing in him*‡; not the leaſt corruption in his nature, not the leaſt defect in his obedience.

He hath done all things well ‖, was the general acclamation of mankind; or, as the words may be rendered, he hath done all things *finely* and *gracefully*†; with every circumſtance that can conſtitute the propriety and dignity, the utility and beauty of action.

I have glorified thee on earth††, was his own profeſſion before the moſt high GOD. I have glorified thee, in all that I acted, in all that I uttered, in all that I ſuffered. I have diſplayed the magnificence of thy majeſty, the riches of thy grace, and the honour of *all* thy attributes. Inſomuch, that *whoſo ſeeth ME, ſeeth the FATHER*=; whoever is properly acquainted with my perſon and my work of redemption, ſees the inviſible and knows the incomprehenſible DEITY;

* Exod. xxviii. 17, 18, 19, 20.
† Luke vi. 38. ‡ John xiv. 30. ‖ Mark vii. 37.
†† Καλως. ++ John xvii. 4 = John xii. 45.

ſees his venerable, his amiable, his adorable perfections, in the cleareſt mirror, and in the brighteſt light *.

GOD alſo, who is the ſupreme ſtandard and unerring judge of excellency, bore his teſtimony to our bleſſed MEDIATOR. He ſpoke it once, yea twice, and with a voice from heaven.—In the conſtitution of the material world, when it came forth from the CREATOR's hand, Omniſcience itſelf could diſcern no flaw. Neither could Juſtice itſelf, upon the ſtricteſt inquiry, diſcover any failure in the obedience of our SURETY. As therefore it was ſaid, concerning the works of creation, *They are all very good* †; ſo it was ſaid, concerning our SAVIOUR, and by the ſame almighty MAJESTY, *In him I am well pleaſed* ‡.

You took notice, and very juſtly, how much the productions of nature *exceed* and *eclipſe* the attempts of human ſkill. We are pleaſed with the performances of the painter: but do they equal the native bluſh of the roſe, or the artleſs glow of a pea-bloſſom? We are charmed with a fine piece of enamelling; but is it fit to be compared with the natural poliſh of a thouſand ſhells which are formed in the ocean, or a thouſand ſeeds which ſpring from the earth? We admire the virtues of the ancient ſaints; men "that were ho-"noured in their generation, and the glory of their "times ||." We admire the meekneſs of *Moſes*, and the magnanimity of *Elijah*, the exalted piety of *Iſaiah*, and the enlarged wiſdom of *Daniel*; the active ſpirit of

* Therefore *CHRIST* is ſaid to be απαυγασμα της δοξης, *Heb.* i. 3. In other objects, we have only ſome obſcure footſteps, or dim traces; here we have the *whole glory* of the GODHEAD. And not barely the glory, but *the very brightneſs* of the FATHER's glory; or, all the divine perfections beaming forth with *adequate*, that is, with ineffable and infinite ſplendor.

† Gen. i. 31. ‡ Matth. iii. 17. || Eccluſ xliv. 7.

of *Joshua*, and the passive graces of *Jeremiah*. But what proportion, put them all together,—what proportion do they all bear to HIS obedience, *who is gone into heaven, angels and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him* *? who is called the HOLY ONE and the *JUST* †; not only by way of emphasis, but by way of *exclusion*; because no person is worthy of the character, no duties deserve to be mentioned, when *CHRIST* and his merits are under consideration.

If then we talk of merit, what *merit* must there be in such immaculate sanctity of soul, and such exemplary holiness of conduct; such ardent zeal for GOD, and such compassionate good-will to man; such consummate worthiness, and extensive usefulness; such as were utterly unknown before; have been absolutely unequalled since; and never will, nor can be paralleled throughout all ages!—O my *Theron!* what is the *drop* of a bucket to the unfathomable waves of the ocean? What is a *grain* of sand to the unmeasurable dimensions of the universe? What is an hour or a *moment* to the endless revolutions of eternity? Such are all human endowments, and all human attainments, compared with HIS righteousness, who is *fairer than the children of men* ‡; *the chiefest among ten thousand* ‖; *and who received not the SPIRIT by measure* ⊥.

Think not, that what I have written is the language of rant. It is a paraphrase, though, I must confess, but a scanty paraphrase, on *David*'s practice, and *David*'s faith. *My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day* ††, *for I know not the numbers thereof.*

* 1 Pet. iii. 22. † Acts iii. 14.

‡ Psal. xlv. 2. ‖ Cant. v. 10. ⊥ John iii. 34.

†† *Psal.* lxxi. 15 I cannot but observe, that *righteousness* and *salvation* are frequently connected, by the author of the *psalms*, and by the prophet *Isaiah*: in order to intimate, that the one is founded on the other; the latter derives its origin from the former; there can be no salvation without a righteousness, a real,

of. The glorious righteousness of *CHRIST*, and the great salvation obtained thereby, he declares, shall be the chosen, the principal subject of his discourse. And not on a Sabbath only, but on *every* day of the week, of the year, of his life. And not barely at the stated returns of solemn devotion, but in every social interview, and *all the day long*.—Why will he thus dwell, perpetually and invariably dwell, on this darling theme? Because *he knew no end thereof*. It is impossible to measure the value, or exhaust the fulness of these blessings. The righteousness is unspeakable, the salvation is everlasting. To compute the duration of the

real, proper, *law-fulfilling* righteousness.—At the same time, I am sensible, that the word righteousness *may* signify GOD's goodness in making, and faithfulness in performing his promises unto *David*. Salvation *may* likewise denote the delivery of that afflicted hero from all his persecutors, and his establishment on the throne of *Israel*.

But if we should confine the sense to these narrow limits, how *comfortless* the favour even to *David* himself, considered as an immortal being! How much more *insignificant* to us and others, on whom the ends of the world are come! And how very *unworthy* of that infinite GOD, who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh; who sees, at one view, whatever is, or has been, or shall exist; who therefore, when he speaks, speaks to all his children, in every period of time, and in every nation under heaven. As much as a tutor, when delivering his lectures, addresses himself to all his pupils, whether they sit at his right hand or his left, before him or on every side.

Whereas, if righteousness signifies the meritorious obedience of *CHRIST*, and salvation implies the benefits of his redemption, the sense is no longer shrivelled, impoverished, and mean; but *rich*, *august*, and *magnificent*. It pours consolation among all people, kindreds, and tongues. It is worthy of that GOD, who seeth the things and regardeth the persons, which are not as though they were. It comports exactly with that revelation, in which *CHRIST* is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the beginning and the ending, the sum total.

This note is already too long; otherwise I should take leave to gratify my inclination, and give a sanction to my sentiment, by transcribing *Vitringa*'s exposition of *Is.* xlv. 8.

the one, numbers fail; to describe the excellency of the other, words are at a loss.

And is this righteousness designed for *us?* Is this to be our wedding dress, this our beautiful array, when we enter the regions of eternity? Unspeakable privilege!—Is this what GOD has provided to supply, more than supply our loss in *Adam!* Boundless benignity!—Shall *we* be treated by the Judge of the world, as if we had performed all this unsinning and perfect obedience? Well might the prophet cry out, like one lost in astonishment, *How great is his goodness!*—Is not your heart enamoured, my dear *Theron*, with a view of this incomprehensibly-rich grace? What so excellent, what so comfortable, what so desirable, as this gift of a SAVIOUR's righteousness! Tho' delineated by this *feeble* pen, methinks, it has dignity and glory enough, to captivate our hearts and fire our affections; fire them with ardent and inextinguishable desires after a personal interest and propriety in it.—O! may the eternal SPIRIT reveal our REDEEMER's righteousness, in all its heavenly beauty and divine lustre! Then, I am sure, we shall esteem it above *every thing;* we shall regard it as the *one thing* needful; we shall count *all things* in comparison of it, worthless as the chaff, and empty as the wind.

To an immortal and fallen soul, every thing else is empty as the wind; but here sinners may *suck and be satisfied with this breast of consolations:* yea thousands and thousands of millions may *milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of its glory* *.—Here we shall find the doctrine of *supererogation* no longer a chimera, but a delightful reality. Here indeed is an immense surplusage, an inexhaustible fund of merit †, sufficient to enrich

* Is. lxvi. 11.

† Yet here is no *rich fund* (as a learned writer asserts,) no fund at all, *for the Pope's treasury of meritorious supererogating actions:* unless *CHRIST* and the *Pope* are to be placed upon

enrich a whole world of indigent and miſerable creatures; ſufficient to make their cup run over with a ſuperabundant fulneſs of peace and joy, ſo long as time ſhall laſt, and when time ſhall be no more. For, to uſe the apoſtle's weighty argument, *If by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteouſneſs, ſhall reign in life by one, JESUS CHRIST* *. If *one* offence, committed by one *mere* man, made all his poſterity chargeable with guilt, and liable to death; HOW MUCH MORE ſhall the *manifold* inſtances of our *divine* REDEEMER's obedience; of his long, uninterrupted, conſummate righteouſneſs;—how much more ſhall they abſolve all his people from condemnation and puniſhment, and entitle them to the honours and joys of immortality!

Which will appear in a clearer light, if, to the perfection of his obedience, we add the *majeſty* of his *perſon*. A proper ſubject this for ſome future letter.—In the mean time, let me deſire my friend, the friend of my boſom, to contemplate our *LORD JESUS* under that lovely and auguſt character, GLORIOUS IN HOLINESS †. And, for my part, I will not ceaſe to pray, that a ſenſe of this ſupereminently grand and precious righteouſneſs may be written on my *Theron*'s heart.—On thoſe living tables, may it be like figures cut on a rock of ſolid marble, or inſcribed on the bark of a growing tree; be *laſting* in its duration as the former, and *ſpreading* in its influence as the latter.—It will then be a ſure proof, that his name is written in the

upon the ſame footing; unleſs the ineffably-excellent obedience of a divine REDEEMER, and the miſerably-defective duties of ſinful men, are to be deemed equally valuable.—Since this will hardly be admitted by *Proteſtants*; I believe, *Aſpaſio* may ſafely call the obedience of *CHRIST, the true ſupererogation*; as Mr *Ambroſe* has called the blood of *CHRIST, the true purgatory*.

* Rom. v. 17. † Exod. xv. 11.

the book of life; and it ſhall then be a pleaſing pattern for

the affection,

the gratitude,

and the friendſhip, of

his ASPASIO.

P. S. You give a moſt aſtoniſhing account of the *preſſure* of the atmoſphere. Aſtoniſhing indeed! that we ſhould be continually ſurrounded, continually overwhelmed, with ſuch a tremendous load; and not be cruſhed to death, no, nor be ſenſible of the leaſt weight. —This, I think, may ſerve to repreſent the ſtate of a ſinner, *unawakened* from carnal ſecurity. Loads, more than *mountainous loads* of guilt, are upon his ſoul, and he perceives not the burden. For this reaſon, he is under no apprehenſions of the vengeance and fiery indignation, which he deſerves; he has no ſuperlative eſteem for the atonement and merits of the REDEEMER, which alone can deliver him from the wrath to come. But, if once his conſcience *feels*, what his lips, perhaps, have often repeated; "We do earneſtly repent us of theſe our miſdoings; the remembrance "of them is grievous unto us, the burden of them is "intolerable;" then how will he prize ſuch a text: *The LORD laid on CHRIST the iniquity of us all!* How will he long for an intereſt in the LAMB of GOD, *which taketh away the ſin of the world!* Then that *JESUS* who has *finiſhed the tranſgreſſion, and brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs*, will be all his ſalvation, and all his deſire.

LETTER VIII.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

I HAVE just been reading that exquisitely-fine piece of sacred history, *the life of Joseph*. A history,—filled with surprising incidents, and unexpected revolutions;—adorned with the most heroic instances of triumphant virtue, both amidst the allurements of temptation, and under the pressures of affliction;—animated with such tender and pathetic, such melting and alarming touches of natural eloquence, as every reader must *feel*, and every true critic will *admire*.

When I came to that remarkable injunction, with which the generous viceroy dismissed his brethren; *Ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt* *,—I paused,—I pondered,—I was struck. Certainly this was injoined, not by way of ostentation; but on account of the pleasure, which, he knew, it would yield the good old patriarch.—Was it some kind prompting angel, or the voice of gratitude and devotion, that whispered in my ear? "Should not the children of "men likewise tell one another of *all the glory*†, which "their REDEEMER possesses in heaven and on earth? "Will

* Gen. xiv. 13.

† *To see the glory of CHRIST*, is the grand blessing, which our LORD solicits and demands for his disciples, in his last solemn intercession, *John* xvii. 24. It is that which will complete the blessedness of heaven, and fill its inhabitants with joy unspeakable and glorious.—Surely, then, we should endeavour to *anticipate*, in some degree, that celestial bliss; and *habituate* our souls to this sacred exercise, which will be our business and our reward to endless ages.

Should the reader desire assistance in this important work, I would refer him to a little treatise of Dr. *Owen*'s, entitled, *Meditations on the glory of CHRIST*.—'Tis little in size, not so in value. Was I to speak of it, in the classical style, I should call

"Will not this afford them the sublimest pleasure "here, and be a source of the most refined satisfac- "tion for ever and ever?"

Though I had almost determined to write no more, till you could make a demand upon the foot of *value received;* willingly I recede from my intended resolution, and obey this pleasing hint.—But *who can declare the noble acts of the* LORD JESUS CHRIST, *or shew forth all his praise?*—However, if I may but *lisp out* his adorable name, and present my friend with a *glimpse* or a *broken* view of his divine perfections, even this will be desirable and delightful; far more desirable and delightful, than to behold *Rome* in its magnificence, St. *Paul* in the pulpit, or King *Solomon* on his throne *.

Let me take the *lark* for my pattern; which, as I was lately returning from an evening-ramble, attracted my observation.--Warbling her CREATOR's praise, she mounted in the serene sky. Still she warbled, and still she mounted, as though she meant to carry her tribute of harmony unto the very gates of heaven. Having reached, at last, her highest elevation, and perceiving herself at an immense distance from the starry mansions, she dropped on a sudden to the earth; and discontinued, at once, both to sing, and to soar. Now the morning appears, and is awakening the world, our little songster returns her throat, and re-exerts her wings.——As I have endeavoured, very imperfectly endeavoured, to strike out a shadowy draught of our LORD's complete obedience; I would, though unequal to the task, once more resume

call it, *aureus, gemmeus, mellitus.* But I would rather say, it is richly replenished with that *unction from the* HOLY ONE, which tends to enlighten the eyes, and chear the heart; which sweetens the enjoyments of life, softens the horrors of death, and prepares for the fruitions of eternity.

* These, if I remember right, are the three things, which St. *Augustine* declared, would, of all others, most eminently gratify his *curiosity.*

my pen, and attempt—nothing like a diſplay, but only a faint *ſketch* of his *eſſential dignity*.

Firſt let me obſerve, that, for ſome time paſt, we have been viſited with the moſt uncomfortable weather; *dewleſs nights*, and *ſultry days*. The firmament was more like a glowing furnace, than the region of refreſhing rain.—The earth lay *parched* with thirſt, and *chapped* with heat. The meadows were drained of their humidity, and all the flowers hung their fading heads.—The ſtreams, which uſed to flow parallel with the verdant margin, abandoned their banks; and ſunk, diminiſhed and diſcoloured, to the bottom of their oozy channels.—Nature in general ſeemed to be reſigning the "robe of beauty, for the garment of "heavineſs." *Drought* was in all our borders; and *famine*, we feared, was not far behind.—Tho' clouds of duſt obſcured the air, tarniſhed the hedges, and almoſt ſmothered the traveller; yet not one cloud of *fleecy white* appeared, to variegate the blue expanſe, or give us hopes of a reviving ſhower *.

It reminded me of that awful threatening, denounced by *Moſes* on a wicked people: *The heaven, that is over thy head, ſhall be braſs; and the earth, that is under thee, ſhall be iron* †.—It made me apprehenſive of that terrible ſtate, which the prophet ſo emphatically deſcribes: *The field is waſted, and the land mourneth. The ſeed is rotten under the clods, and the harveſt periſheth. The garners are laid deſolate, and the barns are broken*

* At ſuch a juncture, how pertinent is the queſtion, propoſed by the almighty MAJESTY? *Job* xxxviii. 37, 38. *Who can number*, muſter or arrange, *the clouds in wiſdom?* ſo as to have them ready at hand, on any emergency. *And who can empty thoſe bottles of heaven*, in copious but ſeaſonable effuſions upon the earth? *when*, as in the caſe deſcribed above, *the duſt* of the roads *is attenuated into powder*, עפר למצקה *and the clods* of the valley *are glued faſt together*, דבק

† Deut. xxviii. 23.

broken down.—The new wine is dried up; the oil languisheth; and all the trees of the field are withered.—How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed. Yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. Because the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness *.—But, blessed be the divine PROVIDENCE, our fears are vanished, and a most joyful change has taken place. The Lord hath *sent a gracious rain upon his inheritance, and refreshed it, when it was weary* †.

Yesterday in the afternoon, the wind shifting to the south, roused the *dormant* clouds, and brought some of those agreeable strangers on its wings.—At first, they came sailing in small, and thin, and scattered parties. Anon, the flying squadrons advanced in larger detachments, more *closely* wedged, and more *deeply* laden. Till, at last, the great rendezvous completed, they formed into a body of such depth, and extended their wings with such a sweep, as darkened the sun, and overspread the whole hemisphere.

Just at the close of day, the gales which escorted the spongy treasures, retired; and consigned their charge to the dispossal of a profound *calm*. Not a breeze shook the most tremulous leaf. Not a curl ruffled the smooth expansive lake. All things were still, as in *attentive expectation*. The earth seemed to gasp after the hovering moisture. Nature, with her suppliant tribes, in expressive pleading silence, solicited the falling fruitfulness; nor pleaded long, nor solicited in vain.

The *showers*, gentle, soft, and balmy, descend. The vessels of heaven unload their precious freight, and enrich the penurious glebe. Through all the night, the liquid sweetness, incomparably more beneficial than trickling silver, distils; shedding herbs, and fruits, and flowers.—Now the sun, *mild* and *refulgent*, issues through the portals of the east. Pleased, as it were, to

* Joel i. 10, &c. † Psal. lxviii. 9.

to have emerged from the late aggravated darkneſs, he looks abroad with peculiar gaiety, and the moſt engaging ſplendors. He looks thro' the diſburdened air, and finds a gladdened world, that wants nothing but his *all-chearing* beams, to render its ſatisfaction complete.

> *The glory comes!—Hail to thy riſing ray,*
> *Great lamp of light, and ſecond ſource of day!*
> *Who robe the world, each nipping gale remove,*
> *Treat every ſenſe, and beam creating love* *.

At his auſpicious approach, the freſhened mountains lift their heads, and ſmile. The garden opens its aromatic ſtores; and breathes, as from a fuming altar, balm to the ſmell, and incenſe to the ſkies. The little hills, crowned with ſpringing plenty, *clap their hands* on every ſide. The moiſtened plains, and irriguous valleys, *laugh and ſing*. While their waters, lately exhauſted, again *are made deep*, and *their rivers run like oil* †.

The whole earth, *ſaturated* with the bounty of heaven, and *fluſhed* with humid life, wears a thouſand marks of gratitude and complacency. Waſhed by the copious rain, how bright and vivid is the univerſal verdure! The *green carpet* below may almoſt vie with the *blue canopy* above.—The foreſt, and every tree, burniſh their colours, and array themſelves in their fineſt apparel: which, as on a day of general feſtivity, is delicately decked with gems; gems of unſullied luſtre, and of genial moiſture.—From every paſture, and from all the grove, the voice of *pleaſure* and of *melody* reſounds. While the officious zephyrs waft the floating harmony, blended with native perfumes; gently waft them to the ſenſes, and touch the very ſoul with tranſport.

Could

* Theſe beautiful lines are borrowed from the SEA-PIECE, canto IV. A *narratory*, *philoſophical*, and *deſcriptive* poem, written by my ingenious friend, Dr *Kirkpatrick*.

† Ezek. xxxii. 14.

Could there be a more brilliant appearance, or more exuberant demonſtrations of joy, even to celebrate the anniverſary of *nature's birth?* With what admirable propriety has the *Pſalmiſt* compared yonder orient ſun, in all his ſparkling grandeur, to a young exulting *bridegroom*;* who comes forth, with every heightened ornament from his chamber, to ſhew himſelf in the moſt diſtinguiſhed period of his life, and to receive the bleſſing which conſummates his happineſs!

This moſt charming and equally-majeſtic ſcene, recalls to my memory that fine deſcription of the MESSIAH, extant in the laſt lovely ſtrains of the *Iſraelitiſh ſwan†:—HE ſhall be* welcome and ſalutary *as the light of the morning; when the ſun ariſeth,* to chaſe the malignant ſhades, and pour day through the reviving world. He ſhall be as the light of *a morning,* that is moſt ſerenely fair; *without* either ſtorms to diſturb, or *clouds* to obſcure the glorious, the delightful dawn. Yea, his appearance ſhall be *more beautiful,* and his influences *more beneficial‡, than the clear ſhining*

* Pſal. xix. 5.

† *Iſraelitiſh ſwan*—In alluſion to thoſe well-known lines of the poet,

Multa Dircæum levat aura cygnum.

And not without a reference to the *popular* notion, that the ſwan ſings the moſt melodious notes in its laſt moments.

Fuit hæc facundi ſenis quaſi cygnea vox. TULLY.

‡ *More beautiful, more beneficial, than the clear ſhining.* 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.—Thus we have ventured to tranſlate, or rather to paraphraſe, the words מנגה. That the prefix מ often occurs in the acceptation of *comparative pre-eminence,* is plain from a very remarkable paſſage in *Pſal.* xix. 10. Where our inſpired author, quite raviſhed with the love of the ſacred oracles, declares, *They are deſirable* beyond *gold, even* beyond *the droppings of the honeycomb.*

If this ſenſe is admitted, we ſhall have a fine compariſon, and a grand advance upon it; acknowledging the *inſufficiency* even of the ſtrongeſt and brighteſt images, to repreſent the glory of

shining of that grand luminary, *after* a night of settled gloom, and showers of incessant *rain*. When his beams shed animating warmth, and vital lustre, *on the* tender *grass* impearled with dews, and on all the green treasures *of the* teeming *earth*.

As we have already contemplated the blessed *JESUS*, under the amiable character of the JUST ONE; the foregoing passage of scripture represents him to our faith, in the more majestic quality of THE LORD OF GLORY; or rather, unites the two grand peculiarities, which render him *unparalleled* in his personal, and *all-sufficient* in his mediatorial capacity.

Great, unspeakably great and glorious would our SAVIOUR appear, if we had no other manifestations of his excellency, than those which preceded his mysterious incarnation.—In the ancient scriptures, he stands characterized, as the supreme object of GOD's ineffable complacency; vested with a glory, prior to the birth of time, or the existence of things; even *the glory, which he had with the FATHER, before the world was* *.—He is every where exhibited, as the ultimate desire of all nations; the sole hope of all the ends of the earth; the seed, of inestimable and universal importance, in whom all people, nations, and languages should be blessed.—In those royal, or rather divine *acts and monuments*, he is publicly recognized, as the RULER of GOD's people; whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation. And how august, how venerable is this SOVEREIGN! since it was the highest

of *CHRIST*'s kingdom, and the benignity of his administration.—Perhaps, the translation may be too free and daring, and not approve itself to the exact *critic*. The sense, however, is unquestionably just; agreeable to the whole tenor of scripture; and can want no recommendation to the intelligent *Christian*.

* John xvii. 5.

eſt honour of the moſt eminent ſaints, and renowned monarchs *, to act as his *harbingers*. The ſplendor of the temple, the richneſs of its ornaments, and the ſolemnity of its ſervices, were the enſigns of his grandeur; were his ſacred *regalia*, intended to uſher him into the world with becoming ſtate.

Every inſpired prophet was his *herald;* deputed to blazon his perfections, or foretell his coming. Let us hear one ſpeaking the ſentiments of all.—*GOD* the *SAVIOUR came from Teman, and the HOLY ONE from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praiſe* †. Thunders ſounded his trumpet, and lightnings waved his banners. *Before him went the peſtilence*, for the deſtruction of his enemies; but, for the deliverance of *Iſrael*, *he rode upon*

* *Moſes*, for inſtance, and *Joſhua*, *David*, and *Solomon*, were types, ſtrongly-marked types, of our great LAWGIVER and DELIVERER, of our divine RULER and PREACHER.

† See *Hab.* iii. The greateſt part of which ſublime ode refers to the wonderful works recorded by *Moſes* and *Joſhua*. It ſeems, eſpecially in the exordium, to be an imitation of that grand and majeſtic deſcription, with which the *Jewiſh* legiſlator introduces his laſt ſolemn benediction, *Deut.* xxxiii.—Theſe works are by *Aſpaſio* aſcribed to *CHRIST*. And, I think, it is demonſtrably certain, that *JESUS CHRIST* is the JEHOVAH celebrated in the books of *Moſes*, and in the writings of the prophets. It is *CHRIST*, who dwelt in the burning buſh, and walked in the burning fiery furnace. It is *CHRIST*, who wrought the miracles in *Egypt*, and the wonders in the field of *Zoan*. The temporal deliverer, and the eternal REDEEMER of *Iſrael*, are one and the ſame.—He is that *Captain of the hoſts of the LORD*, who gave the nations as duſt to their ſword, and as driven ſtubble to their bow, *Joſh.* v. 14.—He is that *mighty One*, who puniſhed the ſtout heart of the king of *Aſſyria;* who cut down the thickets of his foreſt, and lopped his bough with terror, *Iſ.* x. 34.—He gave *Moſes* his commiſſion; gave *Moſes* his law; and was both the LORD, and the end, of that ſacred, ſignificant, myſterious œconomy. Compare 1 *Cor.* x. 9. with *Numb.* xxi. 6, 7. See *Dan.* iii. 25. *Heb.* iii. 3. 4.

upon his horſes and chariots of ſalvation. The mountains ſaw him, and they trembled; the everlaſting hills, and they bowed their heads. The abyſs uttered her voice, and acknowledged his ſovereignty through her deepeſt caverns; *the towering ſurges* * *lifted up their hands*, and remained in a ſuſpended poſture, while his people paſſed through their opening lines.—Indeed, both depth, and height, and every creature, have paid him homage, and done him ſervice. And ſhall not we, my dear *Theron*, *ſubmit to his righteouſneſs?* Submit! ſhall we not embrace it; rely on it; and, with joyful hearts, with triumphant tongues, ſay, *There is none*, there is nothing, *like it* †!

Does not all mankind agree to eſtimate the merit of the practice, according to the *dignity* of the perſon? If a neighbour of inferior rank viſit ſome poor afflicted wretch, in a coarſe garret, and on a tattered bed; it is no very extraordinary favour. But if a lady of the firſt diſtinction, or a nobleman of the higheſt order, perform the ſame office; it is a much more remarkable, a much more admired inſtance of ſelf-denying charity. On the foot of this calculation, to what a *ſupereminent* height will the worthineſs of our LORD's obedience riſe! It will riſe, like ſome magnificent edifice, whoſe baſis reſts upon the center, whoſe dimenſions fill the hemiſphere; and whoſe turrets glitter in the ſky. Or rather, it will extend itſelf to immenſity; where length, and breadth, and all dimenſions are loſt. Eſpecially, if we conſider the *names* he bears, and the *honours* he receives;—the *works* he has done, and thoſe *mightier* works he is appointed to do.

The *names* he bears.—The title by which *JESUS* of *Nazareth* is diſtinguiſhed in the heavenly world; the name written on his veſture, and on his thigh, is *KING*

* רם which, I think, is put in oppoſition to נמך and forms a beautiful contraſt, *ver.* 10.

† 1 Sam. xxi. 9.

KING of kings, and LORD of lords *.—The description, which the incomprehensible JEHOVAH gives of the Surety for sinful men, runs in this exalted strain; *The man that is MY FELLOW* †. Which the apostle explains, in that memorable and majestic clause; *He thought it no robbery to be equal with GOD* ‡. —The HOLY GHOST, speaking by the prophet *Isaiah* of the virgin's son, enumerates several grand distinctions, both of his person, and his office. He styles the child that should be born, *the* WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR, *the* EVERLASTING FATHER,

* Rev. xix. 16.

† *Zech.* xiii. 7. עמיתי *Contribulis vel coequalis: my fellow*, or *my equal*.—The original expression occurs no where, but in this verse of *Zechariah*, and in the book of *Leviticus*. In one text it is explained by *brother*, or partaker of the same nature. In every other place, I believe, it will be found to signify, not barely a *neighbour*, but an *equal*; one who stands upon the same level, with regard to the claims of equity, and the common rights of life.—In either sense, it militates strongly for divinity of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*.

‡ *Phil.* ii. 6. Some writers, I am aware, have endeavoured to interpret away this evidence of our LORD's divine nature; but I think with great injury to the context, and no less violence to the phrase.

Αρπαγμον, as far as I can observe, denotes, not the *prize* or *spoil*, but the *act* of plundering or taking the spoil: *ipsa rapiendi actio*. Vid. STEPH. *Thesaur. Græc. ling.*—If so, the text most naturally implies, that *CHRIST* counted it no act of robbery; no invasion of another's prerogative; but looked upon it as his unquestionable right, to be *equal with GOD*, and to receive divine honours.—*Nevertheless* (αλλα, Rom. v. 14.) he was so far from tenaciously insisting upon, that he willingly relinquished the claim. He was content to forego the magnificent distinctions of the CREATOR, and to appear in the form of a *creature*: nay, to be made in the likeness of the *fallen* creatures; and not only to share the disgrace, but to suffer the punishment, due to the *meanest* and *vilest* among them all.—An example of humility, worthy to be displayed by the eloquence of an apostle, or the tongue of an archangel! worthy to be the everlasting pattern, and the everlasting praise of all believers.

THER, *the* MIGHTY GOD, *the* PRINCE OF PEACE *.—The ſame inſpired writer, tho' eloquent above all orators, and more ſublime than the loftieſt poet, cries out in rapturous aſtoniſhment, *Who can declare his generation* †? What pencil can pourtray, what language can expreſs, his matchleſs excellencies? And may we not with equal propriety demand, Who can declare the meritorious perfection of his righteouſneſs? It is precious beyond compariſon; beyond imagination precious.

The *honours* which our LORD receives, are proportioned to the illuſtrious characters which he ſuſtains.—*John* the Baptiſt, than whom a greater prophet, or a better judge, was not born of woman, profeſſes himſelf unworthy, *to ſtoop down and unlooſe the latchet of his ſhoes* ‡; unworthy, though a burning and ſhining light in his generation, to perform the meaneſt ſervice to this PRINCE of heaven.—*Stephen*, who leads the van in the noble army of Chriſtian martyrs, beheld ſuch a repreſentation of his crucified MASTER's glory, as enabled him to *exult* with

But however ἁρπαγμὸς be tranſlated, the ſtreſs of the argument, I apprehend, lies upon the word ἴσα. If this ſignifies a *real* and *proper* equality, the proof ſeems, to me at leaſt, irrefragable.—How ſhall we determine the exact ſignificancy of this important word! by having recourſe to *Homer*'s works, or to *Heathen* authors? This, in caſe the *ſacred* writers will decide the queſtion, is like going from *Jeruſalem* to *Athens* for the ſolution of a religious doubt, even while the college of apoſtles is ſitting at the former place.—The word occurs five or ſix times in *their* writings. They uſe it, it is true, in the adjective form; but the adjective is very ſufficient to ſettle the ſignification of the adverb. If I know the meaning of ἴσος, I ſhall be at no loſs to underſtand the import of ἴσα.—See *Matth.* xx. 12. *Luke* vi. 34. *John* v. 18. *Acts* xi. 17. *Rev.* xxi. 16. in all which places it expreſſes, not a bare *reſemblance* or *likeneſs* only, but a real and proper *equality*.

* Iſ. ix. 6. † Iſ. liii. 8. ‡ Mark i. 7.

with divine *delight*, even amidſt the furious aſſaults of his perſecutors, and under the violent blows of his murderers *. Aſſured, that *JESUS* has all power in heaven and earth, by an act of the moſt ſolemn worſhip, he *commits* his departing *ſoul*, that moſt important of all truſts, to his REDEEMER's hand †. Nor by the firſt martyr alone, but in all churches of the ſaints, and in every age of Chriſtianity, has the *LORD JESUS* been addreſſed, as the conſtant object of his people's *adoration*; and acknowledged, as the ever-faithful *depoſitary* of their eternal intereſts.

When *Iſaiah* beheld a viſionary manifeſtation of *CHRIST* ‡, the firſt-born ſons of light were waiting around him, in poſtures of dutiful ſubmiſſion. Theſe celeſtial beings, whoſe very *feet* are too bright for mortals to view, veil their *faces* before his infinitely-ſuperior effulgence. The ſeraphs, who are all zeal, and all love, celebrate his perfections, and cry one to another, *The whole earth is full of his glory*.—And is not *heaven* alſo filled with his glory? does not *heaven* likewiſe reſound with his praiſe? The beloved diſciple, in a viſion no leſs clear, and far more magnificent, beholds the LAMB that was ſlain, ſtanding in the *midſt* of a reſplendent *throne*; moſt beautifully adorned with a circling rainbow, and terribly dignified by the blaze of lightnings, and the ſound of thunders. Before this auguſt throne, and at the diſpoſal of the once-ſlaughtered SAVIOUR, are *ſeven lamps of burning fire*; expreſſive of the DIVINE SPIRIT, in all the variety of his miraculous gifts, and ſanctifying graces ||.—Four and twenty elders, clothed in white raiment, with crowns on their heads, and the harps of GOD in their hands, fall proſtrate in deepeſt homage before the LAMB. They ſtrike the golden ſtrings, and ſing that ſublime euchariſtic hymn: *Thou art*

* Acts vii. 56. † Acts vii. 59.

‡ *Iſ.* vi. 1, 2, &c. compared with *John* xii. 41.

|| Rev. iv. 5.

art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to GOD by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us, unto our GOD, kings and priests *.

Behold the hierarchies of angels: they are in number ten thousand times ten thousand.—*Hark!* they raise their voice, and awaken all the powers of harmony.—*Who* is the subject, and *what* is the burden of their song? *Worthy is the LAMB that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing.*—Nor these alone, but every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, join the immense chorus. They cry, in loud responsive strains of melody and devotion, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever* †.

This, you observe, is the devout acknowledgment, not only of the cherubim, the seraphim, and the spirits of just men made perfect, but of *every creature.*—The sun, the moon, and the stars, which garnish the *heavens;*—beasts and creeping things, mountains and hills, fruitful trees, and all cedars, which replenish the *earth;*—metals and minerals, gems and fossils, the subterraneous riches of nature, or things which are *under the earth;*—even all those objects, which my *Theron* lately contemplated, do, in their way, magnify the *LORD JESUS.* They bear witness to his power, as their CREATOR; they are subservient to his interests, as our MEDIATOR; and, in *this* manner, they glorify his sacred name.

Under such views of the blessed REDEEMER, enlarged and elevated even to astonishment, is it possible to *over-rate* the worth of his mediatorial obedience? Is it possible to lay *too much* stress on his expiatory sacrifice,

* Rev. v. 9, 10. † Rev. v. 11, 12, 13.

ſacrifice, or aſcribe *too much* efficacy to his vicarious righteouſneſs?

To the honours which he receives, let us add the *works* which he has done. By theſe, in the days of his fleſh, were diſplayed the greatneſs of his glory, and the might of his majeſty.

Behold! ſays the almighty FATHER; *my ſervant*, he who condeſcends to become my ſervant in the matchleſs work of redemption; *ſhall deal prudently*, ſhall conduct himſelf with all the dignity and all the ſanctity of wiſdom. In conſequence of which, *he ſhall be exalted, be extolled, and be very high* *.—The paraphraſe of the *Jewiſh* commentators on this beautiful climax is, though inadequate, not contemptible. "The MESSIAH," they ſay, "ſhall be higher "than *Abraham*, more illuſtrious than *Moſes*, and "exalted above the angels of light, even above the "*prime miniſters* † of heaven."—What follows, is an attempt to render this expoſition ſomewhat *leſs defective*.

Here, could you open my chamber-door, and peep upon your friend, you would find him in the ſame attitude, and under the ſame perplexity, which were formerly obſerved in *Phocion*. Sitting one day, amidſt an aſſembly of the people, and preparing to make a public oration, he appeared uncommonly thoughtful. Being aſked the reaſon, "I am conſidering," ſaid he, "how I may *ſhorten*, what I ſhall have occaſion to "ſpeak."—The compaſs of my ſubject would demand many volumes; whereas the limits of my letter will allow but a few paragraphs.

Our LORD gave ſight to the *blind*. He poured day upon thoſe hopeleſs and benighted eyes, which had never been viſited with the leaſt dawning ray.—The

* Iſ. lii. 13.

† *Prime miniſters*, this is almoſt a literal tranſlation of their words, מלאכי השרת

The *dumb*, at his command, found a ready tongue, and burſt into ſongs of praiſe. The *deaf* were all ear, and liſtened to the joyful ſound of ſalvation — The *lame*, lame from their very birth, threw aſide their crutches, and full of tranſport and exultation, leaped like the bounding roe *.—He reſtored *floridity* and *beauty* to the fleſh, emaciated by conſuming ſickneſs, or encruſted with a loathſome leproſy.—All manner of *diſeaſes*, though blended with the earlieſt ſeeds of life, and rivetted in the conſtitution by a long inveterate predominancy;—diſeaſes, that baffled the ſkill of the phyſician, and mocked the force of medicine;—*theſe* he cured, not by tedious applications, but in the twinkling of an eye; not by coſtly preſcriptions, or painful operations, but by a *word* from his mouth, or a *touch* from his hand; nay, by the *fringe* of his garment, or the bare act of his will.

Any

* We have the fineſt repreſentation of this event, given us by the inſpired hiſtorian, *Acts* iii. 8. *And he leaping up, ſtood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple; walking, and leaping, and praiſing GOD.*—The very language ſeems to exult, in a *redundant flow* of expreſſive phraſes; juſt as a poor cripple, who never knew either the comfort of bodily vigour, or the pleaſure of local motion, may be ſuppoſed to do, when ſuddenly and unexpectedly bleſſed with both. He would exert his new-acquired powers again and again; firſt in one attitude, then in another: ſometimes to try, whether he was really healed, and not under the pleaſing deluſion of a dream; ſometimes from a tranſport of conſcious delight, and to expreſs the ſallies of joy that ſprung up in his heart.

Though I acknowledge Mr. *Pope*'s deſcription to be extremely beautiful,

> ——————*The lame their crutch forego,*
> *And leap, exulting like the bounding roe;*

yet I cannot perſuade myſelf, that it is to be compared with St. *Luke*'s draught, either in the variety of figures; in the richneſs of colouring; or in that exuberance of ſtyle, which, on this occaſion, is ſo happily ſignificant, and ſo *perfectly picturesque*.

Any *one* of these miracles had been enough to endear the character, and eternize the memory of another person. But they were *common* things, matters of *daily* occurrence, with our divine MASTER. The years of his public ministry were an unintermitted series of such healing wonders; or, if any intermission took place, it was only to make way for more invaluable miracles of spiritual beneficence.

Behold him exercising his dominion over the *vegetable* creation. A *fig-tree*, adorned with the most promising spread of leaves, but unproductive of the expected fruit, *withers away* at his rebuke. It is not only stripped of its verdant honours, but dried up from the very roots *, and perishes for ever. A fearful, yet significant intimation of that final ruin, which will overtake the *specious* hypocrite; who, while lavish in outward profession, is destitute of inward piety.

His eye pierced through the whole *world* of *waters*; discerned the fish that had just swallowed a piece of silver coin, and guided its course to *Peter's* hook †. 'Tis true, when the gatherers of the *sacred tax* came, to collect his share for the reparation of the temple, he had not a sufficiency of money to satisfy so small a demand ‡; yet he takes occasion, from this most abject poverty, to manifest the immensity of his riches. He makes the great deep his *revenue*, and bids the scaly nations bring him their *tribute*. Never was such indigence associated with such magnificence! And never,

* Mark xi. 20.

† *Matth.* xvii. 27. How wonderful is this seemingly little miracle! or rather, what a *cluster* of wonders is comprized in this *single* act!—That any fish, with money in its mouth, should be catched,—with money just of such a value,—and in the very first fish that offered itself!—What a pregnant display of *omniscience* to know, of *omnipotence* to over-rule, all these *fortuitous* incidents!

‡ About fourteen pence.

never, never let us forget, that the indigence was ours, the magnificence all his own!

The *waters* themselves, it may be said, are far more unmanageable than their inhabitants. Who can controul that *outrageous element?* which has destroyed so many gallant fleets, with the armies they bore; and which would laugh at the opposition of the united world.—The *LORD JESUS* walks upon its rolling surges *, and speaks its most tempestuous agitations into a calm. *The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly;* but yet the LORD, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, *is mightier* †.

The *winds* are yet more ungovernable than the madding ocean. When these are hurled ‡ abroad, to shatter the forests, and shake the shores, who can *curb* their rage? what can *withstand* their impetuosity? Even the boisterous winds hear the SAVIOUR's voice; and, as soon as they hear, *obey*. His voice, more powerful to restrain, than brazen dungeons to confine, chides the furious whirlwind. The furious whirlwind

* *He treadeth upon the waves of the sea*, is one of the prerogatives ascribed to the most high GOD, *Job* ix. 8. The original word גלי signifies a sea, that rolls *mountain-high*; and such, we have reason to suppose, were the waves on which our LORD walked; since the vessel to which he bent his course, was βασανιζομενον, *lashed, battered, tormented*, by their vehement concussions, *Matth.* xiv. 24.

† Psal. xciii. 5.

‡ This is the literal translation of that beautiful *Hebrew* phrase, which occurs *Jonah* i. 4.—The sacred writer, describing the stormy messenger, which was dispatched to arrest a fugitive servant, says, ויהוה—The *LORD hurled forth* a great wind. The same expression is applied to *Saul*, (1 Sam. xviii. 11.) when he darted his javelin at *David*, with a design to transfix and nail him to the wall.—What an elegant, and how awful an image! Storms and tempests, with all their irresistible fury and dreadful ravages, are like *missive weapons* in the hand of JEHOVAH; which he launches with greater ease and surer aim, than the most expert warrior emits the pointed steel.

whirlwind is awed into immediate * silence. That which a moment ago heaved the billows to the clouds, and filled with outrage the howling firmament, now gently whispers among the shrouds, and scarcely curls the smooth expanse.

Something there is, even within the narrow compass of our *own breasts*, which affords room for more signal exertions of DEITY, than the turbulent billows, or the resistless storm. Agreeably to the suggestion of a prophet; *For lo! he that formeth the mountains; and createth the wind; and*, as a more pregnant proof of divine perfection, *declareth unto man what is his thought, the GOD of hosts is his name* †; the possessor of such surpassing power and wisdom must unquestionably be the supreme LORD. And who is this, but *JESUS CHRIST? He knew what was in man* ‡. He discerned the secrets of the heart; discerned the latent purpose, before it disclosed itself in action; even before it was uttered in speech; nay, while it lay yet an unformed embryo in the mind.

His glance pierced into *futurity;* espied events, in

* *Immediate*—This circumstance, as very much *aggrandizing* the miracle, is, with great historical propriety, remarked by the Evangelist. The sea is known to have a prodigious *swell*, and very tremendous agitations, for a considerable time after the tempestuous wind ceases. On this occasion, and in obedience to its MAKER's will, it departs from the *established* laws of motion.—No sooner is the word spoken, but there is a *calm*; not an advancing, but an *instantaneous* calm; not a partial, but a *perfect* calm, *Matth* viii. 26. *Mark* iv. 39.

† Amos iv. 13.

‡ *John* ii. 25. This all-discerning intelligence of the DEITY, is very emphatically expressed by the Psalmist, *Psal.* cxxxix. 1, 2, &c. though the sentiment in *one* clause seems to be somewhat weakened by our version. *There is not a word in my tongue*, would have a nobler turn, and more extensive meaning, if rendered, BEFORE *the word is on my tongue, thou, O LORD, knowest it altogether.*

all their circumſtances *, and with the greateſt perſpicuity, before they came into being. The *hidden* things of darkneſs were open, and the *contingencies* of to-morrow were preſent, to his all-pervading eye. Nay, the unthought-of revolutions even of diſtant ages, the aſtoniſhing cataſtrophe of diſſolving nature, and the awful proceſs of everlaſting judgment, he clearly foreſaw, and particularly foretold.

Nor does he only *penetrate* the receſſes, but *overrule* the operations of the ſoul.—He ſo *intimidated* a multitude of ſacrilegious wretches, that they fled, not before his drawn ſword, or bent bow, but at the ſhaking of his ſingle ſcourge †.—He ſo *awed*, by one ſhort remonſtrance,

* *In all their circumſtances.*—See a very remarkable exemplification of this particular, *Mark* xiv. 13. *There ſhall meet you*,—not barely a *perſon*, but the ſex and age are both ſpecified;—not two, or ſeveral, but *one* man;—not within any given ſpace of time, but at the *very inſtant* of your arrival;—not empty-handed, but bearing a *veſſel*;—not of wood or metal, but an earthen *pitcher*;—filled, not with wine or milk, but with *water*;—carrying it into *that very* houſe, where the preparation was made, and the paſſover was to be celebrated.—What a multitude of *contingencies!* all minutely foretold by our LORD!

† *John* ii. 14, 15. *&c.* St *Jerom* looks upon this miracle, as one of the greateſt, which our SAVIOUR wrought. And indeed the circumſtances are very extraordinary.—That *one* man ſhould undertake ſo *bold*, and execute ſo *hazardous* a taſk;—one man, without a *commiſſion* from *Cæſar*; without any *countenance* from the *Jewiſh* rulers; without any *arms*, either to terrify the multitude or defend himſelf.—That he ſhould caſt out the whole tribe of mercenary traffickers; wreſt, from thoſe worſhippers of wealth, their darling idol; and trample under foot their great *Diana*—And all, without tumult or oppoſition; not one of the ſacrilegious rabble, daring to "move the hand, or open the mouth, or peep."—Whoever reflects on the *fierce* and *ungovernable* nature of an incenſed populace; or conſiders the *bitter* and *outrageous* zeal of *Demetrius* and the craftſmen, on a leſs irritating occaſion; may poſſibly find himſelf almoſt, if not altogether, of the *Latin* father's opinion.

remonſtrance *, an aſſembly of conceited and oſtentatious *Phariſees*, that they could neither gainſay, nor endure the energy of his diſcourſe. Though not to endure, was a tacit acknowledgment of guilt, and muſt cover them with public confuſion.—With a word, the moſt *mild* and *gentle* † imaginable, he flung ſuch terror into a band of armed men, as blaſted all their courage, and laid them *ſtunned* and *proſtrate* on the ground.

All *hearts are in his hand. He turneth them, as the rivers of water, whitherſoever he will* ‡; with as much eaſe, and with the ſame efficacious ſway, as the current of the rivers is turned by every inflection of the channel.—*Follow me*, was his call to *James* and *John*: *Follow me* ‖, was all he ſaid to *Levi* the publican. Though the firſt were engaged in all the ardour of buſineſs; though the laſt was ſitting at the very receipt of cuſtom; yet both he and they, without any demur, or the leaſt delay, left their employ, left their neareſt relations, and reſigned their *earthly all*, to attend a poor and deſpiſed MASTER.—Their acquaintance, no doubt, would remonſtrate a thouſand inconveniencies; their enemies would not fail to cenſure them, as raſh enthuſiaſts; but all theſe conſiderations were lighter than duſt, were leſs than nothing, when ſet in competition with *two words only* from *JESUS* of *Nazareth*. Impreſſed, deeply impreſſed

* John viii. 7. † John xviii. 6. ‡ Prov. xxi. 1.

‖ *Mark* ii. 14. He ſaid in the beginning, *Let there be light*; there was light: *Let there be a firmament*; 'twas ſpread abroad: *Let there be a world*; it aroſe of nothing.—In the days of his fleſh likewiſe, he ſpeaks, and it is done. His word is a work. He ſays to the diſciples, *Follow me*; they come:—to the leper, *Be clean*; he is cleanſed:—to the paralytic, *Ariſe, take up thy bed, and walk*; 'tis all performed, as ſoon as commanded.—Surely then we muſt confeſs, this is *the voice of a GOD, not of a man!* רעותה is our LORD's *uſual* word, when he grants a miraculous cure: which exactly correſponds with that admired and magnificent expreſſion ‡ *Gen.* i. 3.

preſſed by his powerful ſummons, ſuch loſs they counted gain, and ſuch obloquy glory.

He planted bowels of compaſſion in the unfeeling avaricious wretch; and *elevated*, beyond the height of the ſtars, deſires that lay *grovelling* even below the mire of the ſwine. The *ſlaves* of ſin he reſtored to the *liberty* of righteouſneſs; and unhappy creatures, who were degenerated into the likeneſs of the devil, he renewed after the image of the bleſſed GOD.—Theſe were the effects of his perſonal preaching; theſe are ſtill the conqueſts of his glorious goſpel; and do not theſe declare his dominion over the intellectual œconomy? that the *world* of *minds*, as well as of material nature, is open to his inſpection, and ſubject to his control?

The *dead* ſeem to be more remote from human cogniſance, than the ſecrets of the breaſt; leſs liable to any human juriſdiction, than the warring elements. What potentate can iſſue a *writ* of *releaſe* to the grave? or cite the diſlodged ſoul, to re-enter the breathleſs corpſe?—Yet this, even this, our mighty MEDIATOR executed. He opened the eyes, which were *ſunk* in their ſockets, and *ſealed* in the tomb. He bid the heart, that had forgot its vital motion, ſpring into renewed and vigorous life. The crimſon flood, long congealed by the icy hand of death; which had not only loſt its pulſe by *ſtagnation*, but likewiſe changed its very texture by *putrefaction* *; circulates, at his order, all florid and mantling with health, through the wondering veins.—The *ſpirit*, which had taken its flight into the *inviſible* ſtate, had taken its place in eternal habitations, returns, at our REDEEMER's ſignal, to the tenement of mouldering clay; and, by the amazing viſit, proclaims his ſovereignty over thoſe *unknown realms*, and their myſterious inhabitants.

As he recalls from, ſo he admits into, the abodes of future

* John xi. 39.

future happineſs. In the very loweſt depths of his humiliation, he diſpoſed of the *ſeats* of *bliſs*, and the *thrones* of *glory*. His hands, when ſwollen with wounds, and nailed to the tree, evidently ſuſtained *the keys of hell and of death* *. Then, even then, he opened and he ſhut either the gates of the grave, or the portals of paradiſe. What he ſpeaks to the penitent thief, is the language of ſupreme authority; *To-day ſhalt thou be with me in paradiſe* †. 'Tis a royal *mandamus*, not an humble petition.

Does our LORD's ſuperiority extend to thoſe malignant beings, the devil and his angels?—Even theſe, in ſpite of all their formidable ſtrength ‡, and inextinguiſhable rage, he makes his footſtool. He brake the teeth of thoſe infernal lions; and reſcued the helpleſs prey, on which their bloody jaws were cloſing. At his command, they abandon their conqueſts; and relinquiſh, however *indignant*, however *reluctant*, their long-accuſtomed habitations. His *ſingle* command, more forcible than *ten thouſand* thunderbolts, diſpoſſeſſes a whole legion ‖ of thoſe fierce and haughty ſpirits; drives them, all terrified and deprecating ſeverer vengeance, to ſeek reſt in ſolitary deſerts, or to herd with the moſt ſordid brutes.

As the bleſſed *JESUS* treads upon the necks of thoſe powers of darkneſs, he receives the willing ſervices of the *angels of light*. They that *excel* § in ſtrength,

* Rev. i. 18. † Luke xxiii. 43.

‡ *Milton*, deſcribing the power of the apoſtate angels, ſays,

———*The leaſt of whom could wield*
Theſe elements: and arm him with the force
Of all their regions. Book VI. 221.

‖ Mark v. 9.

§ Would any one ſee a ſketch of the glory and excellence of the angelic nature? Let him ſee it, in that inimitably fine ſtroke of the ſacred pencil: *I ſaw another angel come down from heaven, having great power, and the earth was lightened with his glory*, Rev. xviii. 1. The laſt clauſe is, I think, one of the moſt maſterly touches of deſcriptive painting, extant in hiſtory,

ſtrength, and are *active* as flames of fire, even they fulfil his commandment, and hearken unto the voice of his words. They graced the ſolemnity of his birth; they attended him, after his temptation in the wilderneſs; they were the firſt joyful preachers of his triumphant reſurrection; and now he is ſeated on the right hand of the MAJESTY in the higheſt,

——They ſtand with wings outſpread,
Liſt'ning to catch their Maſter's leaſt command,
And fly through nature, ere the moment end.

Behold him, now, doing according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;—ſwaying the ſceptre over the legions of hell, and the powers of nature;—exerciſing dominion in the hearts of men, in the territories of the grave, and manſions of diſembodied ſpirits. Then let my *Theron* determine,—under ſuch views of our SAVIOUR's unequalled majeſty, and unbounded ſovereignty, let him determine,—whether it be ſafer to reſt our infinite and eternal intereſts on *our own* righteouſneſs, rather than on *his*.

We

hiſtory, poetry, or oratory. *Milton* gives us a ſtricture of the ſame kind, and on the ſame ſubject. But the *poetic flight*, though very ſublime, is abſolutely inferior to the *apocalyptic viſion*.

——On he led
His radiant files, dazzling the moon.

In this caſe, we have a *whole* brigade of celeſtial warriors; in the former, only a *ſingle* angelic being. Thoſe are repreſented, as irradiating the *night*, and outſhining the *moon*: this, as exceeding the brightneſs of the *ſun*; diffuſing additional ſplendors on the *day*; and illuminating, not a vaſt plain, nor a vaſter kingdom, but the *whole face* of the globe.—If *ſuch* be the luſtre of the ſervant, what images can diſplay the majeſty of the LORD? who has *thouſand thouſands* of thoſe glorious attendants *miniſtering unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtanding before him?* Dan. vii. 10.

We have selected some few manifestations of our REDEEMER's *excellent greatness*. Even the evangelical historians give us no larger a proportion of his astonishing deeds, than the first-fruits bear to a copious harvest. Yet, were they all particularly enumerated, and circumstantially displayed, they would appear inconsiderable, compared with those far *more distinguished* trophies of almighty power, which he has decreed, in some future period, to erect *.

He will gather to his sacred fold, the people of his ancient church; though they are *dispersed* into all lands, and most inveterately *prejudised* against the truth of his gospel.—How mighty was his hand, how illustriously outstretched his arm, when he made a path through the surges of the ocean, drove the torrent of *Jordan* backwards, and fetched rivers of waters from the flinty rock! Far more mighty will be its operations, when he shall remove the seemingly-unsurmountable obstructions to the general *restoration* of

* The dignity of our LORD, considered as the CREATOR and PRESERVER of all things, is not mentioned *here*; because something of this kind is professedly attempted, in *the Descant upon Creation*, subjoined to the first volume of *Meditations among the Tombs*, &c. To which I beg leave to refer my readers; and shall more than make amends for the present omission, by transcribing a passage from the *Night-Thoughts*; which presents us with a magnificent display of this great truth.

——THOU, by whom all *worlds*
Were made, *and* one redeem'd; *whose regal pow'r*
On more than adamantine basis fix'd;
O'er more, far more than diadems and thrones
Inviolably reigns; beneath whose foot,
And by the mandate of whose awful nod,
All regions, revolutions, fortunes, fates,
Of high, of low, of mind and matter, roll
Through the short channels of expiring time,
Or shoreless ocean of eternity.

Night-Thoughts, No. IX.

of the *Jews;* shall throw all their religious apprehensions into a new channel; and cause tears of penitential sorrow to start from their stony eyes, confessions of unfeigned faith to issue from their blaspheming lips. —Yet thus it will assuredly be. In the volume of the divine book it is written, *They shall look on him, whom they have pierced, and mourn* *. They shall adore as the MESSIAH, the once despised *Galilean;* and fix all their hopes of final felicity on that very PERSON, whom their fathers slew and hanged on a tree.

Amazing revolution in the religious world! Yet this, together with the destruction of *Antichrist*, and the illumination of the benighted *Gentiles*, may pass for *small* incidents, compared with those stupendous events, which will dignify, and signalize the closing scene of affairs.

Then shall the *LORD JESUS* be manifested in unspeakable glory; and exert such acts of omnipotence, as will be the *terror* of hell, the *joy* of heaven, the *wonder* of eternity.—Then will he put an end to time, and bid the springs of nature cease to operate. Then shall his tremendous trumpet rend the universal vault, and pierce the dormitories of the dead.—Then will he *shake the earth out of its place* †, and before his majestic presence the *heavens shall flee away* ‡. —Then

* Zech. xii. 10. † Job ix. 6.

‡ How grand is the idea, when *David* prays! *Bow thy heavens, O LORD and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.*—Much grander is the image, when he says, *The springs of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered, at thy chiding, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy displeasure.*—Transcendently and inimitably grand is this description, though given us by the most plain and artless writer in the world: *I saw a great white throne, and HIM THAT SAT ON IT, from whose face the heavens and the earth fled away, and there was no place found for them,* Rev. xx. 11.

In *Virgil*'s admired representation, *Jupiter* hurls his thunder, and a mountain falls at the stroke;

——*Ille*

—Then shall, not *a nation* only, but multitudes, multitudes of nations, *be born in a day* *; yea rather, in an hour, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.—All that are asleep in the beds of death; even those who, perishing in *tempests*, are sunk to the bottom of the ocean; or, swallowed up by *earthquakes*, are buried at the centre of the globe; all shall hear his voice; and hearing, shall awake;

———————————*Ille flagranti*
Aut Atho, aut Rhodopen, aut alta Ceraunia telo
Dejicit. Georg. I. 331.

In *Homer*'s more terror-striking piece, *Neptune* shakes the wide-extended earth. The mountains tremble to their centre; the ocean heaves its billows; and cities reel on their foundations.

———Αυταρ ενερθε Ποσειδαων ενοσιχθων
Γαιαν απειρεσιην, ορεων τ' αιπεινα καρηνα,
Παλλεν δ' ισοσυνδο πολις πολυτιδακου Ιδης
Και κορυφαι, Τρωων τε πολις, ϗ νηες Αχαιων.

Iliad. Y. 57.

Here the SON of the eternal GOD *appears* only, and all nature is alarmed: nor heaven nor earth can keep their standing; they flee away, like the frighted roe.—How *grovelling* are the loftiest flights of the *Grecian* and *Roman* muse, compared with this magnificence and elevation of the *prophetic* spirit!

Let us consider the passage a little more attentively. *Volet hæc sub luce videri.* Masterly performances, the more closely they are examined, the more highly they charm.—It is not said, a few herds of the forest, a few kings, or armies, or nations; but the *whole system* of created things.—It is not said, they were thrown into great commotions, but they *fled* entirely away; not, they started from their foundations, but they *fell into dissolution;* not, they removed to a distant place, but *there was found no place for them;* they ceased to exist; they were no more.—And all this, not at the strict command of the *LORD JESUS;* not at his awful menace, or before his fiery indignation; but at the *bare presence* of his majesty, sitting with serene but adorable dignity on his throne.

If this is not the *true sublime*, in its utmost scope, force, and beauty, I must confess, I never saw it, nor ever expect to see it.

* Is. lx. 8.

awake; and awaking, shall come forth.—Every human body, though *ages* have revolved, since it gave up the ghost; though *worms* have devoured the flesh, and dissolution mouldered the bones; though its parts have been *grinded* by the teeth of beasts, or *consumed* by the rage of fire; dissipated in *viewless* winds, or scattered over the *boundless* globe; lost to our senses, and lost even to our imagination; yet will every human body then be restored; its limbs reassembled, and not an atom wanting; its frame rebuilt, and never be demolished more.

Then shall the unnumbered myriads of departed spirits return from their separate abodes; and, commissioned by HIM *who is the resurrection and the life*, reanimate each his organized system.—Then shall *Satan* and his accomplices, those execrable and horrid criminals, be dragged from their dungeons of darkness, and receive their doom at the REDEEMER's tribunal.—Then will misery and happiness, both *consummate*, and both *everlasting*, be awarded by the SAVIOUR's sentence.—Then will he consign over the *ungodly* world, and the rebellious angels, to the flames of hell, and to agonies of despair. Then will he invest the *righteous* with the inheritance of heaven, and instate them in the fulness of joy. His word is fate; *immutability* seals, and *eternity* executes, whatever he decrees.

And has *this JESUS*, so glorious, so majestic, so adorable,—has HE vouchsafed to take our nature, and become our righteousness? was HE made under the law? did HE fulfil all its demands? give perfect satisfaction to the *penal*, and yield perfect obedience to the *perceptive?* on purpose, that the merit of *all* might be made over to us?—Astonishing condescension! ineffable grace! What thanks are due to such infinitely rich goodness!—What a remedy is here, for the impotence and guilt of fallen man!—What a sure foundation of hope, and what an abundant source of joy, to every one that believeth!

It

It is declared by the oracle of GOD, That *such an HIGH PRIEST became us*, was absolutely necessary for our obnoxious and ruined condition, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,—and made higher than the heavens* *. It appears, I flatter myself, from the letter already in your hand, that *CHRIST* fully answered the former character; and from this epistle, I hope it will appear, that he is the very person described in the latter clause.

Estimate now, my dear friend, estimate if you can, the glory and excellency of this sublime PERSON. Then may you learn how to state the *worth* of his righteousness, and the *degree* of affiance suited to his merits. Rather you will perceive, that his spotless birth, his perfectly-obedient life, his exquisitely bitter death, are a satisfaction of unknown dignity; *precious* †, far beyond all the graces of men, and all the duties of angels; *able* to save to the uttermost, all that rely on them, and come unto GOD through them.

Consonant to this, are the sentiments of that penetrating critic and profound scholar, Dr *Lightfoot*; who, treating of our SAVIOUR's obedience, says,—"Add to all this the dignity of his person, who performed this obedience; that he was GOD as well "as man; and his obedience is infinite; such as in "its validity subdued Satan, and in its all-sufficiency "satisfied the justice of GOD."—After which, our celebrated author makes this important and delightful improvement; "Think, *Christian*, what a stock "of obedience and righteousness here is for thee, "to answer and satisfy for thy disobedience and unrighteousness, if thou become a child of the covenant. Here is enough for every soul that comes "to him, be they ever so many. Like the widow's "oil in the book of *Kings*, there is enough and "enough

* Heb. vii. 26.

† This is expressed by the sacred historian, with an energy which no translation can equal; την τιμην τε τετιμημενε ον ετιμησαντο απο υιων Ισραηλ. Matth. xxvii. 9.

"enough again, as long as any veſſel is brought to "receive it *."

We need not wonder, that *Gentiles*, who are ignorant of the REDEEMER; that *Jews*, who treat him with contemptuous ſcorn; that *profeſſors* of religion; who deny his eternal GODHEAD, place little, if any confidence in his righteouſneſs. But it is ſtrange, that *Chriſtians*, who know the SAVIOUR; who acknowledge his divinity; and believe him to be exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe;—it is exceedingly ſtrange, that they do not *rejoice* in him; *make* their *boaſt* of him; and ſay, with a becoming diſdain, of every other dependence, *Get ye hence* †!

Such an aſſemblage of divine perfections, muſt *warrant*, muſt *demand*, the moſt undivided, and the moſt unbounded confidence.—There never was, no, not in all ages, nor in all worlds, any thing greater or richer, *more* dignified, or exalted, than the obedience of our LORD.—Nay, it is impoſſible to imagine, what could be *ſo* ſuited to our wants, *ſo* proper for our reliance, or *ſo* ſure to anſwer, more than anſwer all our expectations.

Remember what the apoſtle affirms, and you will not wonder at my aſſertion. *In HIM dwelleth all the fulneſs of the GODHEAD bodily.* How comprehenſive and exalted is this deſcription! It collects into a point all the rays of majeſty and honour. It expreſſes in a ſentence, I ſay not whatever this pen has written, but whatever of dignity and excellence the Bible itſelf contains,—*the GODHEAD*, the very nature and eſſence of the DEITY;—*the fulneſs* of the GODHEAD; unerring wiſdom, almighty power, and whatever the great JEHOVAH challenges as his own;—*all* the fulneſs; every adorable attribute, in the moſt ample meaſure, and in the higheſt degree;—all this *dwells*, not viſits occaſionally, but ſtatedly, invariably,

* *Lightfoot*'s works, vol. 2. p. 1258.
† Iſ. xxx. 22.

variably, eternally resides;—dwells in CHRIST JESUS *bodily*, with an union inconceivably close and intimate; insomuch that the GODHEAD inhabiting, and the manhood inhabited, make but one and the same PERSON.

Therefore, adds the sacred disputant, *Ye are complete in HIM* *. Never was any conclusion more weighty in itself, or founded on more solid principles.—Ye are not only pardoned, but reconciled; and not only reconciled, but justified; nay, ye are,—and what can be said or desired more?—ye are COMPLETE. And not barely before men or angels, but before infinite purity and omniscience itself. *Ye are made* (amazing and charming truth!) *the righteousness of GOD* † in this wonderful SAVIOUR.—What a fountain is this, or rather what a sea of fathomless depth, to obliterate all sins, and supply all wants! What a mirrour of GOD's stupendous grace, and ever to be adored loving-kindness!

Here let our meditations fix, and here let all our expectations center. From this, not from any thing of our own, let us derive our peace, our joy, our supreme complacency.—Into this subject we can never dive too deeply. Of this subject we can never think too magnificently. The righteousness of *CHRIST* is the master-pillar, on which our eternal welfare rests. Nay, it is the only support, which preserves us from sinking into endless perdition.

There hangs all human hope; that nail supports
Our falling universe.

This renders his intercession prevalent. He is an advocate, a successful advocate with the FATHER. Why? Because he is *JESUS CHRIST the righteous* ‡.—From hence results his ability to justify. He shall justify many, saith the LORD JEHOVAH. On what consideration? Because he is my *righteous servant*.

* Col. ii. 9, 10. † 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡ 1 John ii. 1.

vant *.—This, and no other, is the meritorious cause of our salvation. *Judah shall be saved;* shall escape damnation, and inherit glory. On what account? On account of *the righteous BRANCH raised up unto David* †.—Since then our acceptance, justification, and salvation; since our comfort in time, and our happiness to eternity, *all* depend upon the righteousness of *CHRIST;* how should we delight in contemplating its *faultless*, its *matchless*, its *transcendent* excellency!—Grand! all-sufficient! in every respect perfect!—Nothing equal to it, on earth, in heaven, throughout the universe!—surpassing the enormity of our guilt! surpassing the reach of our imagination! surpassing all that we can express or conceive! being truly, properly, absolutely DIVINE!

And is this righteousness mine? is this righteousness yours, *Theron?* is this righteousness free for *every* sinner? Pleasing, captivating, rapturous thought!—Who can forbear exulting and triumphing, in this boundless, this infinite blessing? On *such* an occasion, methinks, some sallies of enthusiasm, or even some starts of tautology, are the language of sensibility, of propriety, of nature. *Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD*, the LORD himself, *hath done it.* Our justifying righteousness is finished; finished by JEHOVAH, sojourning in human clay. *Shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains; O forest, and every tree therein. For the LORD hath* most marvellously *redeemed Jacob, and* no less illustriously

* Is. liii. 11.

† *Jer.* xxiii. 5, 6. I believe, it will be needless to observe, that the salvation, mentioned in this and other passages of like import, is not limited to a *temporal* deliverance, but extends to a state of spiritual and *eternal* happiness. The temporal is only a subordinate blessing; a kind of appendage to the other: somewhat like the *halo* round the globe of the moon, or that *faint* and *secondary* range of colours, which frequently attends the glowing rainbow.

ously *glorified himself in* the recovery of *Israel* *.—O for the tongue of a seraph!—But even this would be defective; such ardour cold, and such energy languid.

I have done;—I add no more;—I leave it—to some future letter? to some more laboured essay? No; but to the hymns of heaven, and the adorations of eternity, to supply the deficiency of my acknowledgments. —In the mean time, let me intreat my *Theron* to contemplate our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*, under that most illustrious character, described by the prophet, *A PRIEST upon his THRONE* †; dignifying the sacerdotal censer by the regal diadem; adding all the honours of his *eternal divinity*, to the sacrifice of his *bleeding humanity*.—Then, I promise myself, you will find it almost impossible, not to adopt the emphatical and ardent protestation of the apostle; *GOD forbid, that I should glory*, that I should confide, *save only in the* obedience and the *cross of CHRIST JESUS my LORD!*

When you made the tour of *France* and *Italy;* and, crossing the *Alps*, gained the summit of some commanding ridge;—when you looked round, with astonishment and delight, on the *ample plains*, which, crouded with cities, and adorned with palaces, stretch their beauteous tracts below; when you surveyed the *famous rivers*, that roll in silent but shining dignity; stating the boundaries of kingdoms, and wafting plenty through the gladdened nations; when you shot your transported view to the *ocean*, whose unmeasurable flood meets the arch of heaven, and terminates the landscape with inconceivable grandeur;—did you, then, chuse to forego the pleasure resulting from such a prospect, in order to gaze upon the *naked crag* of some adjacent rock? or, could you turn your eyes from those magnificent objects, and fasten them with pleased attention upon a *shallow puddle*, that lay stagnating at your feet?

You,

* Is. xliv. 23. † Zech. vi. 13.

You, who have beheld the ſcene, can accommodate the ſimile, with peculiar advantage. For which reaſon, I ſhall wave the application; and only beg leave to tranſcribe a wiſh, that is now warm on my heart, and is often breathed in ſupplication from my lips:—May the FATHER of our ſpirits, and the Fountain of wiſdom, *give us an* enlightened *underſtanding, to* KNOW *him that is true;* grant us the ineſtimable bleſſing, *that we may* BE IN *him that is true, even in his SON JESUS CHRIST. For this SAVIOUR is the true GOD, and* that privilege is *life eternal* *.

My *Theron* needs no argument to convince him, that ſuch a prayer is an act of *rational* and *real* friendſhip; is the moſt genuine and ſubſtantial proof, that I am

His truly affectionate

ASPASIO.

* 1 John v. 20.

LETTER IX.

THERON *to* ASPASIO.

Dear ASPASIO,

YOUR two letters have reached my hand; and I hope they have not miſſed my heart. I might inform you what pleaſure they gave me, and how highly I eſteem them. But you deſire no ſuch compliments: you deſire to ſee me impreſſed with the ſentiments, and living under their influence. This would be the moſt acceptable acknowledgment to my *Aſpaſio*, becauſe it would be the moſt happy effect to his *Theron*. May every day, therefore, bring a freſh acceſſion of *ſuch* gratitude to me, and of *ſuch* ſatisfaction to you.

To watch for my ſoul, and pray for my ſalvation,

I am

I am thoroughly convinced, is the trueſt inſtance of rational and exalted friendſhip. Every claim to that amiable character is *defective* and *vain*, if it does not extend to our ſpiritual intereſts, and our everlaſting welfare. For which reaſon, I need not intreat *you* to continue and perpetuate this beſt expreſſion of ſocial kindneſs. Or if I do, it is rather to teſtify how much I prize the favour, than to prompt your affectionate and ready mind.

Your laſt found me at a friend's houſe, which lies pretty near the *weſtern ocean*.—Yeſterday, waked by the lark, and riſing with the dawn *, I ſtrolled into the fragrant air, and dewy fields; while, as *Shakeſpear*, with his uſual ſprightlineſs, expreſſes himſelf,

———————*Jocund day*
Stood tip-toe on the miſty mountain's top.

Sweet was the breath of morn, and ſweet the exhalations of the freſhened flowers;—grateful were the ſoft ſalutes of the cooling zephyrs, attended with the charm of earlieſt birds;—delightful the ſun, painting with his orient beams the chambers of the firmament, and unveiling the face of univerſal nature.

My mind, but little affected with theſe inferior entertainments, was engaged in contemplating an object of infinitely-ſuperior dignity; in contemplating that adorable BEING, who raiſed—from *nothing* raiſed this ſtupendous ſyſtem of things; and ſupports—with his *word* ſupports the magnificent frame; who (to ſpeak in the language of his own SPIRIT) *openeth the*

* *Evandrum ex humili tecto lux ſuſcitat alma,*
Et matutini volucrum ſub culmine cantus. VIRG.
Lux alma—A lovely expreſſion! deſcribing the mildneſs, the beauty, and the chearing efficacy of the riſing ſun. It is, I think, incapable of an *equal* tranſlation; but reminds me of a very fine compariſon in our *ſacred eclogues*, which repreſents the charming appearance, and the benign influence of the goſpel-church, at its firſt opening on the *Gentile world*,—*Who is this that looketh forth as the morning?* Cant. vi. 10.

the eyelids of the morning, and commandeth the day-spring to know its place *; commandeth the light, by its punctual and pleasing ministrations, to draw aside the curtain of darkness, and discover the skies shining with glories, and disclose the earth, blooming with beauties.

FATHER of light and life, said my transported mind,

——————*Thou GOOD SUPREME!*
O teach me what is good! teach me THYSELF.
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
From every low pursuit! and feed my soul
With faith, *with conscious peace, and virtue pure,*
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss †.

Wrapt in wonder, and lost in thought, I rambled carelessly along, till I was insensibly brought to the shore: which, in these parts, is prodigiously high and strong; perfectly well fitted, to stand as an everlasting *barrier* ‡, against the impetuous stroke of conflicting winds, and the ponderous sweep of dashing surges.—Not that the omnipotent ENGINEER has any need of these impregnable ramparts. *Here*, it is true, they intervene; and not only repress the rolling invader, but speak the amazing majesty of their MAKER. In *other* places, all such laboured methods of fortification are laid aside. The CREATOR shews the astonished world, that he is confined to no expedients; but orders all things *according to the pleasure of his own will*.

* Job xxxviii. 12. † THOMSON's Winter.

‡ These, doubtless, are "the doors and the bars," which the ALMIGHTY mentions in the course of his awful interrogatories to *Job*; the *massy* doors, which can never be forced; the *solid* bars, which can never be broke; and I may add, the *conspicuous* columns on which his Providence has inscribed that sovereign mandate, *Ne plus ultra*. Or, as the prohibition runs in his own majestic words, *Hitherto shalt thou go, but no farther*, Job xxxviii. 10.

will. He bids a low bank of despicable sand, receive and repel the most furious shocks of assaulting seas: and, *though the waves thereof toss themselves* with incredible fierceness, *yet can they not prevail;* though *they roar*, and seem to menace universal destruction, *yet can they not pass over* || this slightest of mounds.

A winding passage broke the declivity of the descent; and led me, by a gradual slope, to the bottom.—The moon being in her last quarter, and the tide at its greatest recess, I walked for a while, where briny waves were wont to flow.—The ebbing waters had left a vacant space, several furlongs broad; equal in *length* to a very extended vista; *smooth* on its surface, as the most level bowling green; and almost as *firm*, as the best compacted causey. Insomuch, that the tread of a horse scarce impresses it, and the waters of the sea never penetrate it. Exclusive of this wise contrivance, the searching waves would insinuate themselves into the heart of the earth; the earth itself would be *hollow* as an honey-comb, or *bibulous* as a sponge; and the sea, soaking by degrees through all its cavities, would, in process of time, forsake its bed, and mingle with the plains and mountains. But this closely-cemented or glutinous kind of pavement, is like *claying* the bottom of the universal canal. So that the returning tides consolidate, rather than perforate its substance, and prevent the sun from cleaving it with chinks.—Such, I hope, will be the case with this soul of mine, and the temptations that beset me. Beset me they do, they will. But may they never *win* upon my affections, nor gain *admittance* into my heart! Let them make me humble, and keep me vigilant; teach me to walk closely with my GOD, and urge me to an incessant dependence on *CHRIST*. Then, instead of being *ruinous*, they may become *advantageous;* and instead of shattering, will only cleanse the rock, on which they dash.

The

|| Jer. v. 22.

The mighty waters, reſtleſs even in their utmoſt tranquillity, with a ſolemn * but placid murmur, ſtruck my ear. The billows, ſometimes advancing to kiſs the ſand, ſometimes drawing back their curly heads into the deep, whitened, at their extremities, into an agreeable foam: which, with the reflexive repreſentation of the azure canopy, formed the appearance of a moſt ſpacious floating mantle, tinged with a beautiful blue, and edged with fringes of ſilver.—*Dignity* and *elegance*, I find, are the inſeparable characteriſtics of the CREATOR's workmanſhip. As *comfort* and *happineſs*, I ſometimes perceive, are the very ſpirit of his goſpel, and the genuine produce of his commands.

On one ſide, the *Atlantic* main rolled its ſurges from world to world.—*Immenſe, immenſe* diffuſion of waters! What a ſpectacle of magnificence and terror! What an irreſiſtible incitement to reverence and awe! How it fills the mind, and amazes the imagination! 'Tis the grandeſt and moſt auguſt object under the whole heavens.—It reminds me of that apocalyptic viſion, which *John*, the enraptured ſeer, beheld, *As it were a great mountain burning with fire, was caſt into the ſea, and the third part of the ſea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the ſea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ſhips were deſtroyed* †. I have not penetration enough, to diſcover the ſpiritual meaning of this paſſage; but I diſcern a moſt *dreadful grandeur* in its plain and literal ſenſe.—If we conſider the wonderful compaſs, and the terrible force of ſuch an enormous maſs of fire; if we conſider its horrible

* This is deſcribed with inimitable propriety by HOMER;

Βη δ' αχεων παρα βινα πολυφλοισοιο θαλασσης.

And only not quite ſo beautifully by MILTON;

He ſaid; and as the ſound of waters deep
Hoarſe murmur echo'd to his words applauſe.

† Rev. viii. 8, 9.

horrible and destructive effects, on such a vast body of waters, as the third part of the ocean; how tremendous and astonishing is the idea! Surely, nothing but divine inspiration could suggest these images; as none but an almighty BEING can execute this vengeance. Who would not fear an eternal KING, that has such weapons, and such artillery, *reserved against the day of battle and war* *?

Spacious as the sea is, GOD has provided a *garment* to cover it. Profound as the sea is, GOD has prepared *swaddling-bands* to inwrap it. Ungovernable as it may seem to us, he over-rules it with as much ease, as the nurse manages a new-born *infant* †. An infant it is before almighty power; and to an infant it is compared by JEHOVAH himself; though, to our apprehension, it raves like a *stupendous madman*.—But if he command, it opens a peaceful bosom, and receives his people. It smooths the way for their passage, and stands as a bulwark for their defence. They march *through the midst of the sea upon dry ground, and the waters are a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left* ‡. If he reverses his mandate, they drive down, with an irresistible sweep, upon the hosts of *Pharaoh*, and overwhelm the chariots and horses of *Egypt*. They pour confusion upon Arrogance ‖, and disappoint the designs of Persecution and Cruelty.—If he says, *Be still;* the bellowing surges are hushed, and the gentlest lamb is not so quiet. If he says, *Destroy;* even

* Job xxxviii. 23. † Job xxxviii. 8, 9. ‡ Exod. xiv. 22.

‖ *Arrogance*—This is described with exquisite delicacy, in the EXHORTION or triumphant song of *Moses*. *The enemy said, I will pursue: I will overtake; I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them: I will draw my sword, mine hand shall destroy them.*—What swelling words of vanity are here! The very spirit of a *Thraso* breathes in every syllable of this beautiful *prosopopœia*. Never was the language of *Bluster*, *Ferocity*, and *Rhodomontade*, so finely mimicked.—How noble is the turn, and how exalted the sentiment, which follows! *THOU didst blow*

even the quiescent waters kindle into rage; they rise in their MAKER's cause; and ten thousand lions, stung with hunger, and rushing upon their prey, are not so fierce. When he bids them execute any other commission, the horse broke to the bit, the spaniel disciplined to the signal, are not half so dutiful and obsequious.—And shall *our passions* be more wild than the winds, more turbulent than the billows? Forbid it, almighty LORD! Thou that *rulest the raging of the sea; and the noise of his waves*, restrain, subdue, *and* calm *the madness of the people.*

The eye travels hard. It wanders over a vast, vast length of fluctuating plains *. It reaches the limits of the hemisphere, where skies and waves seem to mingle. Yet it has scarce made *an entry* upon the world of waters. What I here discern, is no more than the *skirts* of the great and wide sea. Tracts incomparably broader are still behind; and tracts of unbounded extent are behind even those.—Great then, O my soul, inconceivably great, is that adored and glorious SOVEREIGN, who sitteth upon this flood, as upon a throne †; nay, who holds it, diffused as it is from pole to pole, in the hollow of his hand; and before whom, in all its prodigious dimensions, it is but as the drop of a bucket.—How shall reptiles of the ground sink *low enough* in their own apprehensions! What humiliation can be sufficiently deep for sinful mortals, before this "high and holy "ONE!" Yet how may they *rise* on the wings of hope!

blow with thy wind; the sea covered them; they sunk as lead in the mighty waters. The GOD of *Israel* need not summon all his power, or level the right-aiming thunderbolts; he only blows with his wind, and the great mountain breaks like a bubble. All this insolent and formidable parade is quashed; sinks into nothing; expires in shame and ruin. *Exod.* xv. 5, 10.

* ——*Camposque natantes.* LUCRET.

† Psal. xxix. 10.

hope! how may they *ſoar* on the pinions of faith! when, in the language of his prophet, and in his own SON's name, they thus addreſs the everlaſting GOD: *Awake! awake! put on ſtrength, O arm of the LORD! awake*, for our ſuccour and ſecurity, *as in the ancient days, in the generations of old. Art thou not it, that hath cut* Rahab, *and wounded the dragon? Art thou not it, which hath dried the ſea, the waters of the great deep? that hath made the depths of the ſea, a way for the ranſomed to paſs over* *?

How grand, ſurpriſingly grand and majeſtic, are the *works*, as well as the attributes of an omnipotent BEING! What are all the canals in all the countries of the earth, compared with this immenſe reſervatory! What are all the ſuperb edifices, erected by royal munificence, compared with yonder concave of the ſkies! And what are the moſt pompous illuminations of theatres and triumphant cities, compared with the reſplendent ſource of day! They are a *ſpark*, an *atom*, a *drop*.—Nay, in every ſpark, and atom, and drop, which proceeds from the hand of the ALMIGHTY, there is the manifeſtation of a wiſdom and a power abſolutely incomprehenſible.

Let us examine a ſingle drop of water, the very leaſt quantity that the eye can diſcern; only ſo much, as will juſt adhere to the point of a needle. In this almoſt imperceptible ſpeck, a famous philoſopher computes no leſs than *thirteen thouſand* globules. Amazing to conceive! impoſſible to explicate!—If then in ſo ſmall a ſpeck abundantly more than ten thouſand globules exiſt, what myriads of myriads muſt float in the unmeaſured extent of the ocean!—Let the ableſt arithmetician try to comprehend in his mind, not the internal conſtitution, but only the *number* of theſe fluid particles. As well may he graſp the winds in his fiſt, or mete out the univerſe with his ſpan, as execute the taſk.—If then we are utterly unable to number

* Iſ. li. 9, 10.

number (which is the *moſt ſuperficial* of all reſearches, even the moſt common works of the great JEHOVAH; how can we pretend to lay open the ſecrets, and penetrate the receſſes of his infinite mind! How can we pretend to inveſtigate the whole proceſs, and ſolve all the difficulties, of that *higheſt* and *deepeſt* of the divine ſchemes, REDEMPTION!

I have ſometimes been offended, I muſt confeſs, when you have enlarged upon the *myſterious* truths of *Chriſtianity*. But I perceive, the beam was in my own eye, when I fancied the mote was in my friend's. Is there, in every ray of light, and in every particle of matter, a depth of contrivance unfathomable by the line of any human underſtanding? And ſhall there be nothing abſtruſe or profound, nothing but what is level to our *ſcanty* apprehenſions, in the *great* * *things* of GOD's law, and the *glorious* † *things* of his goſpel? To expect this, is juſt as wiſe in itſelf, and juſt as congruous to nature, as to expect—a ſea, whoſe cavities might have been digged by our ſpade; —a ſky, whoſe arches are meaſurable by our compaſs; —a ſun, whoſe orb may be included in our lanterns.

When therefore I read of ONE uncreated and eternal BEING, ſubſiſting in THREE divine PERSONS; when I hear of an infinitely pure and perfect GOD, made fleſh for the redemption of ſinful men; when I meditate on the righteous and univerſal JUDGE, reconciling the world unto himſelf, by the death of his own SON;—When a thouſand curious and inquiſitive thoughts are ready to ariſe on the occaſion; I will bid them firſt ſound the depths of a *ſingle* drop, and then apply their plummet to the *boundleſs* ocean. This, I am very ſure, is not weak credulity, nor wild enthuſiaſm; but the matureſt dictate of reaſon, and the very preciſion of truth.—Let then the great CREATOR make that ſublime declaration;

As

* רבי תורתי Hoſ. viii. 12.

† Τα μεγαλεια του Θεου, Acts ii. 11.

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways; and my thoughts than your thoughts *. Let every human creature add that humble acknowledgment; *O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of GOD! How unsearchable* are *his judgments, and his ways past finding out* †! and not devotion only, but reason and truth, will say *Amen* to both.

You see, *Aspasio*, how I am trying to adopt *your* spirit. You will observe the willing scholar, tho' not the great proficient.—But stay! Is this right? to divert from such commanding subjects, and take notice of mere punctilios?—My friend may spare his frowns. I am surprised and angry at myself. Away with the little arts of self-recommendation. *Self* should be forgot, should be *swallowed up* and *lost* in devout astonishment, when we are viewing the magnificence, and meditating on the wonders of creation.

Behind me, and far off to the north, *Cambria*'s dusky coasts just, and but just, emerged. Lost were all her woods and mountains. Instead of ornamented towns, and cultivated plains, a *confused* mist, or a low-hung cloud, seemed to hover on the ocean's remotest brim.—*Behind me!* Remembrance is roused at the expression, and conscience sharpens her sting. Ah! how often and how long, have I treated in this very manner, the noblest scenes, and the sublimest joys! have *turned my back*—ungrateful and besotted creature!—upon the heavenly country, and wandered from the regions of infinite delight! Therefore now they appear *dim*. I have scarcely a glimpse of their transcendent excellencies. Or if I see them by faith, it is with frequent intermissions, and much obscurity.—Turn me, O thou GOD of my salvation, turn me from pursuing phantoms, and attach me to thy blessed self. Let me henceforth steer an invariable

* Is. lv. 9. † Rom. xi. 33.

course to EMMANUEL's kingdom. May its treasures, as I advance, *open* to my view, and its glories *brighten* in my eye. O! may some odours, better, far better, than *Sabaan* spicy odours *, exhale from the delectable hills, and the celestial shores!—But chiefly, thou eternal SPIRIT, breathe upon my soul, both by thy *convincing* and *comforting* influences! nor ever cease to swell my sails, and speed my progress, till I arrive at *the land, that is very far off; and see the KING*, the KING of grace and of glory, *in* all *his* ineffable *beauty* †.

On my left hand, a range of *mountainous cliffs* rose in a perpendicular direction. The huge pile extended, as far as the sight could discern, its black boundaries. Here bending inwards to the land; there bellying out into the deep; every where projecting a shade, several leagues across the ocean.

The *height* of these cliffs so prodigious, that every human creature who comes near the summit, starts back *terrified* and *aghast*. Only a few straggling goats venture to graze on the top: and these, to a person walking below, appear but as specks of moving white. While the sea-mews, that winnow the air about the middle steep, look like winged animalcules, pursuing their little sports in a different region.—The *aspect* of these cliffs so *wild* and *horrid*, it is impossible to behold them without a shivering dread. The spectator is apt to imagine, that nature had formerly suffered some violent convulsions, or been shattered by the flaming

* Alluding to those lines in MILTON,

——————As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, *and now are past*
Mosambic, *off at sea north-east winds blow*
Sabaean *odour, from the spicy shore*
Of Araby *the Blest'd, and many a league*
Cheer'd with the grateful smell old ocean smiles.
Book IV. 159.

† Is. xxxiii. 17.

flaming bolts, and that these are the dismembered remains of the dreadful stroke; the ruins, not of *Persepolis* or *Palmyra*, but of the world!

Amazing! What adventurous daring creature is yonder, gathering *samphire* from the cavities of the rocks! He has let himself down several fathoms beneath the black and dizzy summit.—He gleans a poor livelihood, from the edges of danger, shall I say? rather, from the *jaws* of *death*. I cannot discern the rope to which he clings. He seems to be suspended over the tremendous precipice, by a thread, by a hair, by nothing.—I'll look no longer. The very sight chills my veins. While I view his perilous elevation, I can think of nothing but a headlong downfall, and fractured bones; of brains left to reek on the pointed crags, and blood streaming on the discoloured beach.

Suppose (if the mind can bear so shocking a supposition) some poor wretch, *exposed* on the brow of this stupendous promontory; without any support for his feet; and *cleaving* only to a weak slender shrub, which but just adheres to the interstices of the rock. What tumultuous throbbings seize his breast? what a dying paleness invades his cheeks? and what agonies of fear rend his heart? as he hangs, *projecting over* the ragged precipice; and surveys the ocean deep, wondrous deep below!—The bough gives way. His only hope fails. It yields more and more to his weight. Good heavens! *he sinks! he sinks!* O! for some friendly hand, to snatch him from perishing! Millions, millions of gold, were the cheap purchase of such a mercy.—There was a time, my soul, when thou wast in a situation, equally shall I say? infinitely more dangerous; tottering, not only on the *verge* of *life*, but on the very *brink* of *hell*. Remember that compassionate arm, which was stretched out, in the very article of need, to rescue thee from imminent and everlasting perdition. Never forget that gracious voice, which said,—in accents sweeter than the music of the seraphic

phic choir,—"Deliver him from going down into the "pit.—Let his health be reſtored, and his day of "grace be prolonged."

In ſome places, the hideous ruins not only *tower* to the ſkies, but *lean* over the ſtrand. Prominent and frightfully pendulous, they nod horror, and threaten deſtruction on all below. A perſon congratulates himſelf, when he has got clear of the bending precipice; and can hardly forbear thinking, that the enormous load is with-held by ſome unſeen hand, till the *execrable wretch*, doomed to a moſt aſtoniſhing vengeance, is come within reach of the blow. And truly, if he had the ſtrength of the elephant, or the firmneſs of the behemoth, this muſt grind him to powder, or even cruſh him into atoms.

How awful to conſider, that there is a day coming, when wicked potentates, and haughty monarchs, will beg of yonder ſeas, to *yawn* compaſſionately deep, and hide them in their darkeſt abyſſes; hide them from the piercing eye, and avenging ſword, of inflexible juſtice: —That there is a day coming, when the ſoft voluptuary, the wanton beauty, and all the ungodly of the earth, will beſeech thoſe tremendous ridges, with all their unſupportable burden of craggy rocks, to *ruſh down* upon their guilty heads *; if, by this means, they may be ſcreened from the infinitely more dreaded weight of divine indignation.

Vain are their cries; and vainer ſtill would be their refuge ſhould their paſſionate requeſts be granted. Can floods *conceal* the impious wretches, when the caverns of the ocean ſhall be laid bare, and the foundations of the world be diſcovered? Can rocks *ſecrete* an obnoxious rebel, when rocks, with all their marble quarries, and adamantine intrails, ſhall diſſolve like melting wax? when hills, that plunge their roots to the centre, and loſe their towering heads in air, ſhall ſtart

* Rev. iv. 15, 16.

ſtart from their affrighted baſe *, and flee away like a withered leaf!—Good God †! what racking anguiſh muſt

* This brings to our remembrance a moſt ſublime deſcription of the divine POWER, which ariſes in a beautiful climax, and terminates in this grand idea. *The voice of the LORD is mighty in operation, the voice of the LORD is a glorious voice. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of* Lebanon. *He maketh them alſo to ſkip like a calf*; Lebanon *and* Sirion *like a young unicorn.* Pſal. xxix. 4, 5, 6.

The voice of the LORD is mighty in operation. This is the general propoſition; which, in the following ſentences, we ſee moſt magnificently illuſtrated.—*The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars*; when he ſpeaks in thunder, and bids the lightning execute his orders, the trees, the cedar-trees, thoſe ſturdieſt productions of the earth, are ſhivered to pieces.—*Yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon*; which, for ſtatelineſs and ſtrength, ſurpaſs the oaks of the foreſt, ſurpaſs every tree of the field, almoſt as much as the oak exceeds a ſhrub.—It is a ſmall thing with *JEHOVAH*, to rend the trunks, to tear up the roots, and make thoſe maſſy bodies *ſkip like a calf*; even *Lebanon* and *Sirion*, the mountains on which they grow, tremble before their GOD. They are thrown into ſtrange commotions; they are ready to ſpring from their foundations; and, with all their load of woods and rocks, appear like ſome affrighted or ſome ſportive animal, that *ſtarts* with horror, or *leaps* with exultation.

† *Good GOD!*—This exclamation is introduced on a very ſerious occaſion, and uſed with an apparent air of reverence. Under which circumſtances, perhaps, it may be *ſometimes* allowable, and not diſhonourable to the divine MAJESTY. But, when it is admitted into ordinary converſation, on trifling occurrences, and with a levity of temper; it is itſelf a very great offence, and diſcovers a very irreligious ſpirit.—It is ſo *great an offence*, that the GOD of heaven and earth declares himſelf the avenger of all ſuch tranſgreſſors. *He will not hold them guiltleſs*, or he will aſſuredly puniſh them. And if GOD condemn, who ſhall acquit? If HE will puniſh, who can deliver from his hand?—It diſcovers a *very irreligious ſpirit*; is a moſt dangerous ſymptom; ſomewhat like a plague-ſpot on the converſation. It ſhews, that there is no faving

must they *feel!* what inexpressibly-severer torment must they *fear!* who can implore, ardently implore as a most desirable favour, what imagination itself shudders to conceive.

In some places, these mountainous declivities lift their brow aloft; plant their basis deep; and, instead of *portending* a fall, *defy* the fury of the most impetuous elements. Firmly consolidated, and stedfastly established, they have withstood the united, the repeated assaults of winds and waves, through a long series of revolving ages.—The sacred writers, I observe, select almost all the striking images which the whole creation affords; in order to communicate their heavenly ideas, with the greatest advantage. *Isaiah*, describing the *security* of the righteous, takes his comparison from the grand spectacle before my eyes: *He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks* *; inaccessible as those lofty ridges, immoveable as their everlasting foundations.

Should it be asked, what these munitions of rocks may signify?—I find two places of refuge and safeguard pointed out in scripture; to either of which, I believe, the metaphor is applicable. *He had horns*, says one of the divine Pindarics, *coming out of his hand; there was the hiding of his power* †. Uncontroulable and

saving health, no life of GOD in the soul. Was there any sensibility in the conscience, any grace in the heart, it would be impossible to treat so wantonly and so presumptuously, *that glorious and fearful name*, *THE LORD THY GOD*, Deut. xxviii. 58.

* Is. xxxiii. 16.

† *Hab.* iii. 4. *Horns* were an emblem of *strength*. *A horn of salvation* is put for a mighty and effectual salvation, *Luke* ii. 69. *Thou hast heard me from among the horns of the unicorns*; thou hast rescued me from the most potent and formidable enemies, *Psal.* xxii. 21. Here the word seems to denote that power of JEHOVAH, to which nothing is impossible; and more than seems, if we consult the next clause.—*There was*

and omnipotent power was lodged in the great JEHOVAH's hand; and this was the sure defence, this the impregnable garrison, for all his people.—The church of *CHRIST* is said to be *in the clefts of the Rock* * : that *spiritual Rock*, of which the *Israelites* drank in the wilderness; whose sacred clefts were opened, when the bloody spear tore up the REDEEMER's side, and cut a wide and deadly passage to his heart. Surely, *the inhabitants of this Rock* have reason to *sing* †. What should disquiet them? Who can destroy them? Why should not the voice of joy be in their dwellings, and that hymn of holy triumph in their mouths? *We have a strong city. Salvation hath GOD appointed*, salvation itself, *for walls and bulwarks.*

was the hiding of his power; or, as it may be rendered, *his powerful hiding*, a most secure refuge, a sanctuary absolutely inviolable. I have accommodated this passage to a different sense, *Meditat. vol.* I. *p.* 187 But the true signification, most suitable to the context, and most subservient to the prophet's design, is, I apprehend, given by *Theron.* It is somewhat like an exalted sentiment in the *Night-Thoughts*; which, with a small alteration, may serve as a paraphrase on the text:

And nature's shield the hollow of his hand.
A Christian's shield the hollow of his hand.

* *Cant.* ii. 14. Should the reader have an inclination to see this sacred, but mysterious book explained, I would refer him to Dr GILL's *Exposition of the Canticles*: which has such a copious vein of sanctified invention running through it, and is interspersed with such a variety of delicate and brilliant images, as cannot but highly entertain a *curious* mind: which presents us also with such rich and charming displays of the glory of *CHRIST*'s person, the freeness of his grace to sinners, and the tenderness of his love to the church, as cannot but administer the most exquisite delight to the *believing* soul.—Considered in both these views, I think, the work resembles the paradisiacal garden, described by MILTON; in which

Blossoms *and* fruits *at once of golden hue*
Appear'd, with gay enamell'd colours mix'd.

† Isa. xlii. 11.

warks *.—Happy ſhould I think myſelf, if I was intereſted in this SAVIOUR, and eſtabliſhed on this Rock.

Yonder, on the ſummit of the moſt conſpicuous cliff, is erected a grand and ſtately pile. At the top, my glaſs diſcovers a ſuperb lantern; at the foot, are the huts of fiſhermen, ſurrounded with various ſorts of nets.—It is, I ſuppoſe, a *light-houſe*: intended to appriſe the ſailor of devouring gulfs, and deſtructive ſhoals; or elſe to conduct him into a ſafe road, and ſecure harbour.

Both the ſituation and deſign of the building read me a leſſon; the one of awful admonition, the other of comfortable inſtruction.—*Comfortable inſtruction.* How maſſy and ponderous is the edifice! yet there is not the leaſt reaſon to be apprehenſive of a failure in the foundation. Was the ſtructure ten thouſand times larger, the ſolid rock would ſupport it, with the utmoſt eaſe, and the utmoſt ſteadineſs. Such is *CHRIST*, ſuch are his merits, ſuch his glorious righteouſneſs, to thoſe wiſe and bleſſed ſouls, who reſt all the weight of their everlaſting intereſts on him alone. *Such*, did I ſay? Much ſurer. For *the mountains may depart, and the hills may be removed* †; but this divine baſis can never ſink, can never be ſhaken.—*Awful admonition.* For it recalls to my memory that alarming yet welcome text ‡, which you ſtyled the ſpiritual light-houſe: which has been as ſerviceable to my diſtreſſed mind and bewildered thoughts, as ſuch an illuminated watch-tower to the wandering and benighted mariner. May I often view it! ever attend to its faithful direction; and be led, by its influences, into the haven, the deſired haven of peace and ſalvation!

Let me once again ſurvey thoſe vaſt but noble deformities; thoſe rude but majeſtic elevations of ſtone.—*Fortifications*, reared by an almighty hand, to protect

* Iſ. xxvi. 1. † Iſ. liv. 10.

‡ See *Rom.* ix. 30, 31, 32. and above, *Letter* V.

tect us at once from warring elements, and invading enemies.—*Ramparts*, which overlook and command the ocean; which, viewed by distant mariners, seem to touch and prop the sky; which have surrounded our isle ever since the universal deluge, and will be her never-failing defence even to the general conflagration.—if some opinionated engineer should take it into his head, to suspect the stability of these unshaken and everlasting bulwarks; if he should make proposals for strengthening them with buttresses, or girding them round with cramping irons! how would his project be received? with approbation and applause? or with contempt and indignation? "Fool that he is! "to think of enlarging, corroborating, or improving "the *finished* and *magnificent* works of nature, by the "*puny* piddlings of art!"—Such, so foolish and preposterous was my once favourite conceit, of adding my own performances, in order to increase the justifying efficacy of *CHRIST*'s obedience. What a disparagement was this to the great, the divine foundation! which, for the support and security of burdened and endangered sinners, is *sufficient*,—is *self-sufficient*,—is *all-sufficient*.

How *changeable* is the face of this liquid element! Not long ago, there was nothing, from this stony boundary, to the horizon's utmost verge, but the wildest tumult and most horrible confusion. Now the stormy flood has smoothed its rugged brow, and the watery uproar is lulled into a profound tranquillity. Where *rolling mountains* rushed and raged, threatning to dash the clouds, and deluge the earth; there the *gentlest undulations* play, and only just wrinkle the surface of the mighty bason. Where the dreadful abyss opened its wide and unfathomable jaws, to swallow up the trembling sailor, and his shattered vessel; there a calm and clear expanse diffuses its ample bosom, allur-

ing the fish to bask in the sun, and inviting the sea-fowl to watch for their prey.

In this fair floating mirror, I see the picture of every cloud, which passes through the regions of the sky. But in its uncertain and treacherous temperature, I see more plainly the inconstant and ever-variable condition of human affairs.—I durst not be surety to the mariner, for peaceful seas and soothing gales. I could not ascertain the continuance of this halcyon weather, so much as a single day, or even to the next hour. And let me not fondly promise myself an *uninterrupted* tenor of serenity in my mind, or of prosperity in my circumstances.—Sometimes, indeed, my heart exults under the smile of heaven, and the favour of GOD. But soon; ah! too soon I am clouded with fear, and oppressed with corruption. I sigh out that passionate acknowledgment, *Wretched man that I am!* and add that wishful inquiry, *Who shall deliver me?*—For this disordered state of things, the afflicted patriarch's complaint, is the most apposite motto, and the most wholesome memento; *Changes and war are around me* *.—But there is a world, where disastrous revolutions will be known no more; where our enjoyments will no longer *fluctuate* like the ocean, but be more stedfast than the rocks, and more immoveable than the shores.

Here I see an immense collection of waters, in a state of deep repose. Could I extend my view to some remoter tracts, I should behold every thing smoother and calmer still. Not a furrow sinks, nor a ridge swells the surface of the ocean. 'Tis all like a glassy plain. The waves are asleep. Echo is hushed. Not a gale stirs. The sea stagnates; the mariner is *becalmed;* and the vessel scarcely creeps.—Whereas, could I survey the Straits of *Magellan*, or the Gut of *Gibraltar*, I should find a very striking difference. There the waters press in with vehemence, and rush forwards with

* Job x. 17.

with impetuosity. All is there in strong agitation, and rapid progress. The ship is *whirled* through the narrow passage; and rides, as it were, on the wheels of the surge, or on the wings of the wind.—This, my dear *Aspasio*, is a true image of what I have been, and of what I am. Some months ago, when I was insensible of guilt, all my prayers were listless, and all my religion was a spiritual lethargy. I felt not in my heart, what I uttered with my tongue. *Hosannahs* were but an empty ceremony, and confessions froze on my formal lips.—But, since the SPIRIT of GOD has awakened me from my dream, and convinced me of my sinfulness, I can no longer be satisfied with indolent and yawning devotions. Trials and temptations put strong cries into my mouth. My soul mourns before the LORD; my desires plead with the blessed GOD; and I am ready to say, as the patriarch of old, "I cannot, I must not, *I will not let thee* "*go, unless thou bless me* *."

I see no flocks of sheep, with sober assiduity, nibbling the grassy plains. No sportive lambs, with innocent gaiety, frisking along the sunny banks. Here are no stables for the generous steed, nor pastures for the lusty heifer. Nevertheless, these watery regions are stocked with colonies of *proper* and *peculiar* inhabitants:—who are clothed and accoutred in exact conformity to the clime: not in swelling wool, or buoyant feathers; not in a flowing robe, or a full-trimmed suit; but with as much compactness, and with as little superfluity, as possible. They are clad, or rather *sheathed* in *scales;* which adhere closely to their bodies, and are always laid in a kind of natural oil. Than which apparel nothing can be more *light*, and at the same time nothing more *solid*. It hinders the fluid from penetrating their flesh; it prevents the cold from coagulating their blood; and enables them to make their way through the waters, with the utmost facility.

* Gen. xxxii. 26.

facility.—They have each a curious inſtrument *, by which they increaſe or diminiſh their ſpecific gravity; ſink like lead, or float like a cork; riſe to what height, or deſcend to what depth, they pleaſe.

This is the abode of *leviathan*, hugeſt of living creatures. Before whom the broad-limbed elephant, and the tall-necked camel, are mere ſhrimps. A ſtretched-out promontory, when he ſleeps; a moving iſland, when he ſwims; "making the ſea to boil like a pot," when unwieldily wallowing, he takes his prodigious paſtime.—Here the voracious *ſhark*, that tyrant of the fluid kingdoms, and aſſaſſin of the finny nations, roams and commits his ravages; embrues his horrid fangs, and marks his rapid path, with blood.—Here dwelt that *great*, and greatly-ſurpriſing *fiſh*, whoſe fierceneſs and avidity the almighty SOVEREIGN employed as his purſuivant, to arreſt a fugitive prophet; whoſe ample jaws, or capacious intrails, were the dungeon to confine a rebellious ſubject, and the cabin to lodge a penitent offender: whoſe bulk, and ſtrength, and ſpeed, were a kind of veſſel, tranſporting this convict to *the bottom of the mountains, and the bars of the earth* †. After the criminal was ſufficiently chaſtiſed, and properly humbled, they ſerved as a galley with oars, to convey him ſafe to land.

In the ſame element reſides (at leaſt takes up part of his reſidence) that formidable monſter, who is made without fear, and *has not his like upon earth*. He eſteemeth the pointed iron as ſtraw, and ponderous braſs as rotten wood. His heart is as hard as a piece of the nether millſtone, and his ſcales are a coat of impenetrable mail. Strength not to be reſiſted, much leſs to be ſubdued, lies entrenched in his ſinewy neck. His eyes are like the eyelids of the opening day; and when he rolls thoſe glaring orbs, there ſeems to be another morn riſen on mid-noon. His teeth are terrible, jagged for rapine, and edged with death. His throat is as a burning fur-

nace;

* The air-bladder. † Jonah ii. 6.

nace; clouds of ſmoke are poured from his noſtrils, and flakes of fire iſſue from his mouth. None, no not the moſt reſolute, dares provoke him to the combat, or even ſtir him up from his ſlumbers. He laugheth at the ſhaking of the ſpear, and *ſorrow marcheth in triumph before him* *. Whenever he raiſeth himſelf, the mighty are afraid; where-ever he advanceth, ruin is there.—If a mere creature is capable of ſpreading ſuch alarm and dread, how *greatly* is the CREATOR himſelf to be feared! who can turn the moſt harmleſs inhabitant of the ocean into a ravenous alligator, or a horrid crocodile! who can arm every reptile of the ground with all the force and rage of a lion!

'Tis impoſſible to enter on the muſter-roll, thoſe ſcaly herds, and that minuter fry, which graze the ſea-weed, or ſtray through the coral groves. They are innumerable, as the ſands which lie under them; countleſs, as the waves which cover them.—Here are uncouth animals, of *monſtrous* ſhapes †, and *amazing* qualities.

* *Job* xli. 22. לפניו תדון ראבה *Mœror*, ſays *Bochart*, *præcedit tanquam metator et comes, tumidique anteambulo regis.* Terror and anguiſh are a kind of *advanced guard* to this monarch among the reptiles: or, they go before the monſter, as the man bearing a ſhield went before the *Philiſtine* giant.—The original word occurs in no other part of the divine book, I cannot recollect any expreſſion, which ſo fully repreſents its meaning, as *Homer*'s κόθων, or *Xenophon*'s γαυρασθαι; both which are intended to deſcribe the ardour and action of a high-mettled prancing ſteed.—The whole paragraph is a ſketch of the *crocodile*'s picture. It exhibits a few circumſtances, culled from that inimitable deſcription, extant in the book of *Job:* which are given, either in the ſacred writer's *own* words, or elſe in a *paraphraſtic* explanation of their ſenſe.

† *Monſtrous ſhapes:*—Such as the *ſword-fiſh*; whoſe upper jaw is lengthened into a ſtrong and ſharp ſword: with which he ſometimes ventures to attack the ſhips, though armed with thunder; and is capable of piercing their ſides, though ribbed with oak. This may be called the *champion* of the waters; who, though never exceeding ſixteen feet in length, yet, confiding

qualities *. Some that have been discovered by the inquisitive eye of man; and many more, that remain among the secrets of the hoary deep.—Here are sholes and sholes, of various characters, and of the most diversified

siding in a weapon at once so trusty and so tremendous, scruples not to give battle even to the whale himself.—The *sun-fish* has no tail; seems to be all head; and was it not for two fins, which act the part of oars, would be one entire round mass of flesh.—The *polypus*, remarkable for its numerous feet, and as many claws; by which it has the appearance of a mere insect, and seems fitted only to crawl. At the same time, an excrescence, arising on the back, enables it to steer and pursue a steady course in the waves. So that it may pass under the two-fold character of a *sailor* and a *reptile*.—*Horace* intimates, that the *British* ocean is famous for producing sea-monsters;

Te belluosus qui remotis
Obstrepit oceanus Britannis.

* *Amazing qualities.*—Among these may be reckoned the *torpedo*, which benumbs on a sudden, and renders impotent, whatever fish it assaults; and, which is a more extraordinary property, strikes even the fisherman's arm, when he offers to lay hold on it, with a temporary deadness. By this means, it possesses the double advantage, of arresting its prey, and securing itself.—The *cuttle fish*, furnished with a liquid magazine, of a colour and consistence like ink: which, when pursued by an enemy, the creature emits, and blackens the water. By this artifice, the foe is bewildered in the chace; and while the one vainly gropes in the dark, the other seizes the opportunity, and makes his escape.—The *nautilus*, whose shell forms a natural boat. The dextrous inhabitant unfurls a membrane to the wind, which serves him instead of a sail. He extends also a couple of arms, with which, as with two slender oars, he rows himself along. When he is disposed to dive, he strikes sail; and, without any apprehension of being drowned, sinks to the bottom. When the weather is calm, and he has an inclination to see the world, or take his pleasure, he mounts to the surface; and, self-taught in the art of navigation, performs his voyage without either chart or compass; is himself the *vessel*, the *rigging*, and the *pilot*.—For a more copious illustration of this amusing and wonderful subject, see *Nat. Displ.* vol. III.

diverſified ſizes; from the *cumbrous* whale, whoſe flouncings tempeſt the ocean, to the *evaneſcent* anchovy, whoſe ſubſtance diſſolves in the ſmalleſt fricaſſee.—Some, lodged in their pearly ſhells, and fattening on their rocky beds, ſeem attentive to no higher employ, than that of imbibing moiſt nutriment. Theſe, but a ſmall remove from vegetable life, are almoſt rooted to the rocks, on which they lie repoſed. While others, active as the winged creation, and ſwift as an arrow from the *Indian* bow, ſhoot along the yielding flood, and range at large the ſpacious regions of the deep.

Here is the *tortoiſe*, who never moves but under her own portable pent-houſe. The *lobſter*, which, whether he ſleeps or wakes, is ſtill in a ſtate of defence, and clad in jointed armour. The *oyſter*, a ſort of living jelly, ingarriſoned in the bulwark of native ſtone. With many other kinds of ſea-reptiles, or, as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, *things creeping innumerable* *.—I am ſurpriſed at the variety of their figure, and charmed with the ſplendor of their colours. Unſearchable is the wiſdom, and endleſs the contrivance, of the all-creating GOD!—Some are rugged in their form, and little better than hideous in their aſpect. Their ſhells ſeem to be the rude production of a diſorderly jumble, rather than the regular effects of ſkill and deſign. Yet we ſhall find, even in theſe *ſeeming* irregularities, the *niceſt* diſpoſitions. Theſe abodes, uncouth as they may appear, are adapted to the genius of their reſpective tenants, and exactly ſuited to their particular exigencies. Neither the *Ionic* delicacy, nor the *Corinthian* richneſs, nor any other order of architecture, would have ſerved their purpoſes half ſo well, as this coarſe and homely fabric.

Some, on the other hand, are extremely neat. Their ſtructure is all ſymmetry and elegance. No enamel in the world is comparable to their poliſh. There's

* Pſal. civ. 25.

There's not a *room* of *state*, in all the palaces of *Europe*, so brilliantly adorned, as the dining room and the bed-chamber of the little fish, that dwells in *mother of pearl*. Such a lovely mixture of red, and blue, and green, so delightfully staining the most clear and glittering ground, is no where else to be seen. The royal power may covet it, and human art may mimic it; but neither the one, nor the other, nor both united, will ever be able to equal it.

But what I admire more than all their streaks, their spots, and their embroidery, is, the extraordinary provision made for their *safety*.—Nothing is more relishing and palatable than their flesh. Nothing more heavy and sluggish than their motions. As they have no speed to escape, neither have they any dexterity to elude the foe. Were they naked or unguarded, they must be an easy prey to every free-booter that roams the ocean.—To prevent this fatal consequence, what is only cloathing to other animals, is to them a *cloathing*, a *house*, and a *castle*. They have a fortification, that grows with their growth, and is a part of themselves. By this means, they live secure amidst millions and millions of ravenous jaws: by this means they are *imparked*, as it were, in their own shell; and, screened from every other assault, are reserved for the use and pleasure of mankind.

This is the birth-place of *cod*, the standing repast of Lent. This is the nursery of *turbot*, for its exquisite relish justly styled, the pheasant of the waters. Hence comes the *sturgeon*, delicious even in pickle, and a regale for royal luxury; hence the *flaunders*, dappled with reddish spots, and a supply for vulgar wants.—Here dwell the *mackarel*, decked, when haled from their native element, richly decked with the most glossy dies; the *herring*, whose back is mottled with azure, and his belly sleek with silver: the *salmon*, in plainer habit, but of larger substance, and higher esteem, than either or both the preceding.—These, when

when ſhotten and lean, wander wildly up and down the vaſt abyſs. When *plump* and *delicate*, they throng our creeks, and ſwarm in our bays: they repair to the ſhallows, or haunt the running ſtreams.—Who bids theſe creatures evacuate the ſhores, and diſperſe themſelves into all quarters, when they become worthleſs and unfit for our ſervice? Who rallies and recalls the undiſciplined vagrants, as ſoon as they are improved into deſirable food? Who appoints the very ſcene of our ambuſhes, to be the place of their rendezvous? ſo that they come like volunteers to our nets?—Surely, the furlow is ſigned, the ſummons iſſued, and the point of re-union ſettled, by a Providence ever indulgent to mankind; ever ſtudious to treat us with dainties, and *load us with benefits* *.

We have wondered at † our *SAVIOUR*'s penetration and power;—his *penetration*, which, though the ſea was at a diſtance, and walls intervened, diſcerned the fiſh, that had juſt ſwallowed a piece of money;—his *power*, which, without any delay, brought the lawleſs rambler, charged with the ſilver ſpoil, to *Peter*'s hook. But is it not equally wonderful, to obſerve ſuch innumerable multitudes of finny viſitants, annually approaching our ſhores, and crouding our banks? which furniſh our tables with a wholeſome and delicate *repaſt*; at the ſame time that they yield to our nation a *revenue* ‡, more certain, and no leſs conſiderable, than the mines of *Peru*.

Theſe approach, while thoſe of *enormous* ſize and *tremendous* appearance abandon the ſhores. The latter might endanger the fiſherman's ſafety, and would certainly

* Pſal. lxviii. 19. † See *Letter* VIII. *p.* 177.

‡ We are told by the aforementioned author, that the banks of *Newfoundland* alone, bring in to the proprietors of that fiſhery, a revenue of ſeveral millions every year.—And they will, in all probability, be an unimpaired reſource of treaſure, when the richeſt mines now wrought in the world, are choaked up or exhauſted.

certainly ſcare away the valuable fiſh from our coaſts. They are therefore reſtrained by an inviſible hand, and abſcond in the abyſſes of the ocean. Juſt as the wild beaſts of the earth, impelled by the ſame overruling power, hide themſelves in the receſſes of the foreſt.—A ſhip, infected with a peſtilential diſtemper, is obliged to keep off at ſea; and not permitted to enter the port, till ſhe has performed her *quarantine*. In like manner, theſe monſters of the deep, whoſe very buſineſs is deſtruction, are laid under a *providential* interdict: only with this very deſirable difference, that, as their preſence would always be pernicious, they are never ſuffered to come near; their quarantine is *perpetual*.

Aſk now the beaſts, and they ſhall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they ſhall tell thee: or ſpeak to the earth, and it ſhall teach thee *; *and the fiſhes of the ſea ſhall declare unto thee;*—that the LORD is *gracious;*—that his tender mercies are over *all* his works; that to *us* he is ſuperabundantly and profuſely good: having ordered all things in the ſurges of the ocean, as well as on the ſurface of the ground, for our rich accommodation, and for our greateſt advantage.

One circumſtance relating to the natives of the deep, is very peculiar, and no leſs aſtoniſhing. As they neither ſow, nor reap; have neither the produce of the hedges, nor the gleanings of the field; they are obliged to *plunder* and *devour* one another, for neceſſary ſubſiſtence. They are a kind of authoriſed banditti, that make violence and murder † their profeſſed trade.

* *Job* xii. 7, 8. The *earth* is repreſented, as bearing witneſs to the immenſe benignity of the bleſſed GOD. Some *minutes*, or a ſhort *abſtract*, of her teſtimony on this occaſion, may be ſeen in *Letter* VI.

† To this, I believe, the prophet alludes, in that remarkable expreſſion, *Thou makeſt men as the fiſhes of the ſea.* Thou ſufferest men to commit, without reſtraint or control, all manner of outrages. What ſhould be a civil community, is a ſcene of

trade.—By this means, prodigious devaſtations enſue; and, without proper, without very *extraordinary recruits*, the whole race muſt continually dwindle, and at length be totally extinct.—Were they to bring forth, like the moſt prolific of our terreſtrial animals, a dozen only, or a ſcore at each birth; the increaſe would be unſpeakably too ſmall for the conſumption. The weaker ſpecies would be deſtroyed by the ſtronger; and, in time, the ſtronger muſt periſh, even by their ſucceſsful endeavours to maintain themſelves.—Therefore to ſupply millions of aſſaſſins with their prey, and millions of tables with their food, yet not to depopulate the watery realms; the iſſue produced by every breeder is almoſt incredible. They ſpawn, not by ſcores or hundreds, but by thouſands and by millions *. *A ſingle mother* is pregnant with a *nation*. By which amazing, but moſt needful expedient, a periodical reparation is made, proportionable to the immenſe havock,

As the ſea is peopled with animated inhabitants, it is alſo variegated with *vegetable* productions. Some ſoft as wool; others hard as ſtone. Some riſe, like a leafleſs ſhrub; ſome are expanded, in the form of a net; ſome grow with their heads downward, and ſeem rather hanging on, than ſpringing from, the juttings of the

of oppreſſion. The weakeſt are a prey to the ſtrongeſt, and every one ſeeks the deſtruction of his neighbour. *Hab* i. 14.

* Mr *Petit* found 342,144 eggs in the hard roe of a carp, ſixteen inches long. Mr *Lewenhoeck* counted, in a cod of an ordinary ſize, 9,384,000 eggs.—A fecundity perfectly amazing! but admirably adapted to the preſſing exigencies of the watery world; admirably contrived for the benefit and delight of mankind!—If we advert to this peculiarity, it will give the utmoſt emphaſis to the patriarch's *metaphorical* expreſſion, and an inimitable beauty to his *prophetic* wiſh, יִדְגּוּ לָרֹב *Let theſe* my grandſons *grow into a multitude*; or, which is more exactly anſwerable to the original, *let them multiply abundantly even like the fiſhes of the ocean*, Gen. xlviii. 16.

the rocks. These may, with much greater propriety, than the famous plantations of *Semiramis*, be called *pensile* gardens —But, as my walk reached no farther than the purlieus of the ocean; as neither you nor I have ever taken a single turn among those submarine groves; as *Moses*, *Joshua*, and *Jonah*, the only writers that ever made the wonderful tour, intent upon *more important* themes, have left us no memoirs relating to this curious point; I shall not venture to advance any thing particular on the subject. Only one remark I would offer in general——

The herbs and trees, which flourish on the dry land, are maintained by the juices, that permeate the soil, and fluctuate in the air. For this purpose, they are furnished with *leaves*, to collect the one; and with *roots* to attract the other. Whereas, the sea-plants, finding sufficient nourishment in the circumambient waters, have no occasion to detach a party of roots into the ground, and forage the earth for sustenance. Instead therefore of *penetrating*, they are but just *tacked* to the bottom; and adhere to some solid substance, only with such a degree of tenacity, as may secure them from being tossed to and fro, by the random agitation of the waves.

We see from this, and numberless other instances, what a *diversity* there is in the operations of the great CREATOR's hand. Yet every alteration is an improvement, and each new pattern has a *peculiar fitness* of its own.—The same œconomy takes place, such a difference of administration I mean, in his government of the rational world. In "chusing an heritage for his people," and assigning a condition to each of his servants, there is a great variety with respect to individuals; yet a perfect uniformity, and complete harmony, with respect to the whole.—Some he calls out to a course of distinguished labours. They make an illustrious figure in life, and appear *as a city set on an hill!*

hill * ! Others he consigns over to obscurity. They are like the prophets, whom good *Obadiah* hid in a cave, and are styled *his secret ones* † *Those*, the cedars, which stand conspicuous on the top of *Lebanon: these*, the violets, which lie concealed at the top of a brier.

St *Paul* was eminently qualified for busy scenes, and the most extensive services. He is introduced therefore, into places of concourse. His ministry lies amidst the most renowned and populous cities. Even his *imprisonment* at *Rome* seems to have been a providential expedient for fixing him, as it were, on the *stage* of public observation, and in the very *centre* of universal intelligence. Where his preaching was like plunging a stone into the midst of a smooth canal; which affects not only the neighbouring parts of the surface, but spreads the floating circles over all the wide expanse.—Whereas, the beloved *John*, being less fitted to bustle among a croud, is sent into the unfrequented *solitary* island; there to indulge the flights of heavenly contemplation; and receive, with uninterrupted attention, the mysterious visions of GOD. —*Job* shall have thorns in his path; have the dunghill for his seat; and be exposed, as a mark, to all the arrows of tribulation. *Solomon* shall dip his foot in oil; shall be elevated on the throne of royalty; and surrounded with the most lavish caresses of heaven.

In all this seeming, this more than seeming contrariety, there is a display, not only of sovereign authority, but of consummate propriety.—The great HEAD of the church, acts like a judicious *general;* and appoints such a station to each of his soldiers, as corresponds with the ability he gives. He acts like the most skilful *physician;* and prescribes such a remedy for all his patients, as is most nicely suited to their respective cases. He knows the precise point of time, the particular place of abode, the peculiar circumstances

* Matth. v. 14. † Psal. lxxxiii. 3.

ces of condition, which are moſt proper for each and every of his children; and like a tender as well as unerring *father*; what he knows to be beſt, that he conſtantly allots.—I ſaid, like a general, like a phyſician, like a father. But the compariſon is low; the language is inexpreſſive; *CHRIST* is all that is implied in theſe relations, and unſpeakably *more*.—O! that we may rejoice in the ſuperintendency of ſuch a SAVIOUR; and not only reſign ourſelves to his will, but *thank* him for managing the helm; *thank* him for ſteering our courſe through the changes of time, and the uncertainties of futurity. Since, whatever our froward and petulent paſſions may ſuggeſt, the LORD's ways are ſo far from being unequal, that they have all poſſible fitneſs and propriety; they are ordered "in "number, weight, and meaſure."

All is ſo very different from the proſpects, which lately preſented themſelves, that I can hardly forbear aſking, Whether I am not tranſlated into a *new world*? —Where are the waving hillocks, covered with the CREATOR's bounty? where are the fruitful valleys, made vocal with his praiſe? No cultured field, no opening bloſſom, not ſo much as a green leaf appears. None of my late entertainments remain, but only the cooling zephyrs. Which are no longer perfumed with the *breath* of flowers, but impregnated with the *freſhneſs* of the ocean.—Yet, tho' all thoſe lovely landſcapes are withdrawn; though the gurgling fountain is ſilenced, and the blooming garden loſt, I am not far from the origin, both of the odours which exhale from the one, and of the cryſtal which flows from the other. I am now upon the margin of that *grand reſervoir*, which ſupplies the country with its fertility, and the parterre with its beauty.—The ſea is the inexhauſtible ciſtern of the univerſe. The air and ſun conſtitute the mighty *engine*, which works, without intermiſſion, to raiſe the liquid treaſure.

While

While the clouds serve as so many *aqueducts*, to convey the genial stores along the atmosphere; and distribute them at seasonable periods, and in regular proportions, through all the regions of the globe.

I question, whether the united application of mankind could, with their utmost skill, and with all possible percolations, fetch a single drop of *perfectly* sweet water * from this unmeasurable pit of brine. Yet the action of the solar heat draws off, every hour, every minute, millions and millions of tons, in vaporous exhalations: which, being skilfully parcelled out, and securely lodged in *the bottles of heaven* †, are sent abroad, sweetened, and refined, without any brackish tincture, or the least bituminous sediment:—sent abroad upon the wings of the wind, to *distil* in dews, or *pour* themselves in rain; to *ooze* from the orifices of fountains ‡; to *trickle* along the veins of rivulets; to *rise*

* I have not forgotten, what was lately affirmed in our public papers, that a certain ingenious gentleman, I think in the city of *Durham*, had found out the art of *sweetening* sea-water.—What he produced, might probably approve itself to the taste, and not be without its usefulness. Yet I cannot but query, whether it will be found to have all those fine, balmy, salutiferous qualities which distinguish and recommend the *rain-water:* which has been exhaled by the kindly warmth of the sun; has been filtrated by passing and repassing through the regions of the air; has been clarified in the highest and purest tracts of the atmosphere; has been further refined and perfected by the searching agency of the winds.—I should very much wonder, if the *puny* alembec could equal this *grand* apparatus of nature.

† So the clouds are *elegantly* styled in sacred writ, *Job* xxxviii. 37.

‡ We are obliged to *Clemens Romanus*, for the most just and elegant representation of fountains and their usefulness, that perhaps any where exists, Αιναοι τε πηγαι προς απολαυσιν ὑμετεραν δημιουργηθεισαι, ἱνα μη ελλειψεως παρεχοιτο τυς προς ζωην ανθρωποις μαστους 1 epist. ad *Corinth.* He calls *fountains*, the breasts or teats of the earth. The comparison, I believe, is his own; and nothing can exceed it, as to propriety and beauty.

riſe in the cavities of wells; to *roll*, in many a headlong torrent, from the ſides of mountains; to *flow*, in copious ſtreams, amidſt the boſom of burning deſerts, and through the heart of populous kingdoms; in order to refreſh and fertilize, to beautify and enrich, every ſoil, in every clime.

How amiable is the goodneſs, and how amazing is the power, of the world's adorable MAKER!—How *amiable his goodneſs!* in diſtributing ſo largely, what is ſo abſolutely neceſſary, and ſo extenſively beneficial! That water, without which we can ſcarce perform any buſineſs, or enjoy any comfort, ſhould be every one's property; ſhould ſpring up from the ſoil; ſhould drop down from the clouds; ſhould ſtream by our houſes; ſhould take a journey, from the ends of the earth, and the extremities of the ocean, on purpoſe to ſerve us.—How *amazing his power!* that this boundleſs maſs of fluid ſalt, ſo intolerably nauſeous to the human taſte, ſhould be the original ſpring, which deals out every palatable draught to mankind, and quenches the thirſt of every animal! Doubtleſs, the power by which *this* is effected, can extract comfort from our afflictions, advantage from our calamities, and *make all things work together for our good* *.

Vaſt and various are the advantages †, which we receive from the liquid element; *vaſt*, as its unbounded extent; *various*, as its ever-mutable ſurface.—The ſweet waters glide along the earth, in ſpacious currents; which not only exhilarate the adjacent country, by their humid train, and *exhaling* moiſture; but, by giving a briſk impulſe to the air, prevent the unwholeſome

* Rom. viii. 28.

† The high *value* which mankind ſet upon this element, and the many *benefits* they receive from its miniſtration, both theſe particulars are very ſtrongly expreſſed by the *Hebrews*: who call a pool or reſervoir of water ברכה; which denotes, in its primary ſignification, *a bleſſing*, Cant. vii. 4. Iſ. vii. 3.

ſome ſtagnation of their own vapours.—They paſs by opulent cities, and receiving all their filth, rid them of a thouſand nuiſances: which, when once committed to theſe *fluid ſcavengers*, are as effectually ſecreted, as if they were buried ever ſo deep in the earth.—Yet, though they condeſcend to ſo mean an employ, they are fitted for more honourable ſervices. They enter the gardens of a prince, and compoſe ſome of the moſt delightful ornaments of the palace. They glitter upon the eye, as they float in the ample *canal*. They muſe the imagination, as they aſcend in curious *jet d'eaus*. They yield a nobler entertainment, as, forming themſelves into ſheets of ſloping ſilver, they fall in graceful or in grand *caſcades*.—If, inſtead of beautifiers, we think proper to make uſe of them as *drudges*, they ply at our mills; they toil inceſſantly at the wheel; and, by working the hugeſt engines, take upon themſelves an unknown ſhare of our fatigue, and ſave us a proportionable degree of expence.

So forcibly they act, when collected; and moſt ſurpriſingly they inſinuate, when *detached*. They throw themſelves into the body of a plant; they penetrate the minuteſt of its organized tubes; and find a paſſage through meanders, *too ſmall* for the eye to diſcern, *too numerous* and intricate even for imagination to follow.—How difficultly does a labourer that ſerves the maſon, puſh his way up the rounds of a ladder, bending under the burden of mortar on his head! while theſe ſervants in the employ of nature, carry their load to a much greater height; and climb with the utmoſt eaſe, even without the aſſiſtance of ſteps or of ſtairs. They convey the nutrimental ſtores of vegetation, from the *loweſt fibres* that are plunged into the ſoil, to the very *topmoſt twigs* that wave amidſt the clouds. They are the caterers for the vegetable world; or (if I may be allowed the expreſſion) the *ſutlers*, which attend the whole *hoſt* of plants, to furniſh them with ſeaſonable refreſhment, and neceſſary proviſion. By means

of which, *the trees of the LORD are full of sap, even the cedars of Lebanon which HE hath planted*‡, And, notwithstanding their vast elevation, and prodigious diffusion; though they are abandoned by man, and deprived of all cultivation; yet not a single branch is destitute of leaves, nor a single leaf of moisture.

Besides the salutary, cleanly, and serviceable circulation of the rivers; the sea has a libration, no less advantageous, and much more remarkable.—Every day, this immense collection of waters, for the space of five or six hours, *flows* towards the land; and, after a short pause, *retires* again to its inmost caverns; taking up nearly the same time in its retreat, as it required for its access.—How *great* is the power, which sets the whole fluid world in motion! which protrudes to the shores such an inconceivable weight of waters, without any concurrence from the winds, frequently in direct opposition to all their force! How *gracious* also is the Providence, which bids the mighty element perform its tumbling revolutions, with the most exact punctuality! Was it suffered to advance with a lawless and unlimited swell, it might sweep over kingdoms, and deluge whole continents. Was it irregular and uncertain in its approaches, navigation would be at a stand, and trade become precarious.—But, being constant at its *stated periods*, and never exceeding its *appointed bounds*, it creates no alarm to the country, and affords very considerable aids to traffic.

The tide, at its *flow*, rushing up our large rivers, clears and deepens the passage; in many places spreads a copious flood, where a dry and empty waste lay before.—Is the sailor returned from his voyage, and waiting at the mouth of the channel? The *flux* is ready to convey his vessel to the very doors of the owner; and without any hazard of striking on the rocks, or being fastened in the sands.—Has the merchant freighted his ship? would he have it transferred to the ocean?

‡ Psal. civ. 16.

ocean? The *reflux* tenders its service; and bears away the load, with the utmoſt expedition, and with equal ſafety.—Behold, O man! how greatly thou art beloved, how *highly favoured* by thy MAKER! In what part of his works has he forgotten or overlooked thy welfare? Shew me a creature, point out a ſpot, in the formation or diſpoſition of which, he has not been mindful of thy intereſts? *He has made thee to have dominion over the works of his hands, and has put all things in ſubjection under thy feet. All ſheep and oxen; the fowls of the air, and the fiſhes;* yea, and the ſurges *of the ſea* *, are ſubſervient to thy benefit. Even theſe, wild, and impetuous as they are, yield their willing backs, to receive thy load; and, like an indefatigable beaſt of burden, carry it to the place which thou ſhalt nominate.

What preſerves this vaſt flood in a ſtate of perpetual *purity?* It is the univerſal ſewers, into which are diſcharged the refuſe and filth of the whole world. That which would defile the land, and pollute the air, is tranſmitted to the ocean, and neither miſchief nor inconvenience enſue.—Thoſe ſwarms of *locuſts*,—which, while living, were a plague to *Pharaoh*, by their loathed intruſion; and when dead, might have cauſed a more dreadful plague, by their noiſome ſtench;—ſwept into the ſea, were neither peſtilential, nor offenſive. How then is this receptacle of every nuiſance kept clean? Why does it not contract a noxious taint, and diffuſe a deſtructive contagion? ſuch as would render it a *grave* to the aquatic, and *bane* to the terreſtrial animals?—'Tis owing, partly to its inceſſant motion, partly to its ſaline quality. By the one, it is ſecured from any *internal* principle of corruption; by the other, it works itſelf clear from every *adventitious* defilement.

A directory this, and a pattern for me!—Thus may divine *grace*, like the penetrating power of ſalt, cure the

* Pſal. viii. 6, 7, 8.

the depravity of my heart, and rectify the disorders of my temper! season my words, and make all my conversation savoury!—Thus may a continual course of *activity*, in my secular and my sacred vocation, prevent the pernicious effects of indolence! Let me daily exercise, or be attempting to exercise, the graces of Christianity, lest faith become feeble; lest hope contract dimness; and charity wax cold.

Now the tide begins to flow. Wave rises upon wave, and billow rolls over billow. Nothing can divert, nothing retard its progress; no, not for a moment. Though *Canutus* be in the way*; though his royal authority, and strict prohibition, nay, though all the forces of his kingdom oppose; it will never discontinue

‡ Alluding to a memorable and instructive story, recorded of King *Canutus*; who, probably without having read, had nevertheless thoroughly learned, that excellent lesson of *Horace*:

Regum timendorum in proprios greges,
Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis.

Some of his abject and designing flatterers had the *impious assurance* to tell him, "his power was more than human."—To convince them of their folly, and rebuke them for their falsehood, he ordered his chair of state to be placed on the extremity of the shore, just as the tide began to flow. Here he took his seat, in the presence of the *parasites*, and many other attendants. Then, with all that dignity of air, and severity of accent, which sovereign authority knows how to assume, he said,—"Thou sea, the land on which I sit is mine; "nor has any one dared to invade my rights, or disobey my "commands, without suffering the deserved punishment. I "charge thee, therefore, on pain of my highest displeasure, "not to enter these territories, nor touch the feet of *Eng-*"*land*'s monarch."

When the rude waves made bold to enter on the forbidden ground; nay, when those uncourtly things presumed to rush upon the royal seat, and even to dash his Majesty's person; he started from his throne, and bid every beholder observe the *impotence* of earthly kings; bid them remember, that HE alone is worthy of the name, whom winds, and waves, and universal nature obey.

tinue the advancing ſwell, till it has reached the deſtined point.—So, may I *always abound* in communion with GOD, or in beneficence to men; reſigning one religious or charitable employ, only to enter upon another; and be *thus* preſſing forward, *ſtill* preſſing forward to the prize of my high calling in *CHRIST JESUS;*—differing from thoſe regular viciſſitudes of the ocean, only in one particular; that *my* endeavours never ebb, *my* ſoul never draws back. Since this would be, if *temporary*, to my grievous loſs; if *final*, to my aggravated perdition.

Conſider the ſea in another capacity, and it *connects* the remoteſt realms of the univerſe, by facilitating an intercourſe between their reſpective inhabitants.—What ſhort-ſighted beings are mankind! how extremely ſuperficial their views! how unavoidable therefore their frequent miſtakes! The ancients looked upon this bottomleſs deep, as an *unpaſſable* * gulf. If our forefathers were ſo egregiouſly miſtaken in this inſtance; let us not too peremptorily pronounce upon any difficult or myſterious point; leſt ſucceeding generations, or a more enlightened ſtate, ſhould cover us with the double confuſion of *childiſh* ignorance, and *fooliſh* conceit.

We have clearly demonſtrated, and happily experienced, the very reverſe of that grey-headed ſurmiſe to be true. The ocean, inſtead of being a bar of ſeparation, is the great bond of union. For this purpoſe, it is never *exhauſted*, though it ſupplies the whole firmament with clouds, and the whole earth with rains; nor ever *overflows*, though all the rivers in the univerſe are perpetually augmenting its ſtores, and pouring in their tributary floods.—By means of this element, we travel farther, than birds of the ſtrongeſt

* ——————*Deus abſcidit*
Prudens oceano diſſociabili
Terras. HOR.

ſtrongeſt pinion fly; and diſcover tracts, which the *vulture's eye has never ſeen* *. We make a viſit to nations, that lie drowned in their midnight-ſlumbers, when every induſtrious perſon on *this* part of the globe, is beſtirring himſelf in all the hurry of buſineſs. We cultivate an acquaintance with the ſun-burnt *Negro*, and the ſhivering *Icelander*. We croſs the flaming line, we penetrate the frozen pole, and wing our way even round the world.

This is the great vehicle of *commerce*.—Not to mention the floating caſtles, which contain whole armies; which bear the thunder, the fiery tempeſts, and all the dreadful artillery of war; what a multitude of ſhips, of the largeſt dimenſions, and moſt prodigious burden, are continually paſſing and repaſſing this univerſal thoroughfare! ſhips, that are freighted, not with ſacks, but with harveſts of corn; that carry not pipes, but vintages of wine; that are laden, not with bars of iron, blocks of marble, or wedges of gold, but with whole quarries of maſſy ſtone, and whole mines of ponderous metal. All which, lodged in theſe *volatile ſtorehouſes*, and actuated by the breath of heaven, are wafted to the very ends of the earth; wafted, enormous and unwieldy as they are, more expeditiouſly than the light *berlin* bowls along the road; almoſt as ſpeedily, as the nimble-footed *roe* bounds over the hills †.

Aſtoniſhing ordination of eternal wiſdom! yet moſt graciouſly contrived for the benefit of mankind! I can hardly ſatisfy my view, in beholding this rolling chaos; I can never ceaſe my admiration, in contemplating its amazing properties:—That an element, ſo *unſtable*

* Job xxviii. 7.

† A ſhip, under a briſk and ſteady gale, will ſail at the rate of 216 miles in 24 hours; perſevering, if the wind continues favourable, in the ſame rapid career, for ſeveral days together: A courſe, which, conſidering both its *ſwiftneſs* and *duration*, cannot be equalled by the ableſt horſe, perhaps not by the nimbleſt creature that treads the ground.

unſtable and *fugitive*, ſhould bear up ſuch an immenſe weight, as would bend the firmeſt floors, or burſt the ſtrongeſt beams!—That the *thin* and *yielding* air ſhould drive on, with ſo much facility and ſpeed, bodies of ſuch exceſſive bulk, as the ſtrength of a legion would be unable to move!—That the air and the water, acting in conjunction, ſhould carry to the diſtance of many thouſand miles, what the united force of men and machines could ſcarcely drag a ſingle yard.—Puny and deſpicable are *our* attempts; but great and marvellous are *thy* works, O LORD GOD almighty! *If thou wilt work*, ſays the prophet, *who* or what *ſhall let it* *? Neither the meanneſs of the inſtrument, nor the greatneſs of the event. A ſling and a ſtone ſhall lay the gigantic bravo in the duſt †. An ox-goad ſhall do more execution than a battery of cannon ‡. Even *a worm ſhall threſh the mountains, and beat them ſmall, and make the hills as chaff* ||. GOD ALL-SUFFICIENT is his name, and out of weakneſs he maketh his ſtrength perfect.—O! that we, my dear *Aſpaſio*,—that I eſpecially,—may be ſtrong in the LORD, and in the power of his might! Then, as the light air is made to act with a more forcible impulſe, than the moſt vigorous engines; as the fluid water is made to ſuſtain more ponderous loads, than the moſt ſubſtantial works of maſonry; ſo we, who in ourſelves are nothing but *impotence*, ſhall be enabled to triumph over the legions of hell, and tread down all the temptations of the world.

How are the mariners conducted through this *fluid common*, than which nothing is more wide, and nothing more wild? Here is no tract to be followed; no poſts of direction to be conſulted; nor any ſhepherd's hut, where the wandering traveller may aſk his way.—Are they guided by a pillar of fire in the night, or a moveable cloud in the day? as the ſons of *Jacob* and *Joſeph* were

* Iſ. xliii. 13. † 1 Sam. xvii. 50. ‡ Judg. iii. 31.
|| Iſ. xli. 14, 15.

were escorted through the eastern deserts. No; but by a mean, contemptible, and otherwise worthless *fossil*.—The apostle *James* mentions it, as a very observable fact, that the *ships*, *which are so great, and driven of fierce winds, yet are turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth* *: Is it not equally wonderful, that they should be led through such a pathless and unmeasurable waste, by so small an expedient, as the intervention of the *loadstone* †?—Till this surprising mineral was discovered, and its properties were improved, navigation lay in its cradle; was, at best, a mere infant, that crept timorously along the coasts; was obliged to keep within sight of the shores; and, if driven out beyond the narrow sphere of her land-marks, could neither ascertain her situation, nor pursue her voyage. But this guide,—when every beacon on the top of the hills is vanished from the acutest ken; where nothing but skies are seen above, and seas alone appear below;—*this guide* points out the proper passage. This communicates an intelligence, which shines clear in the thickest darkness, and remains steady in the most tempestuous agitations. This has given, not indeed birth, but *maturity* to navigation; and turned her swaddling-bands into *wings*. This has emboldened her to launch into the heart of the ocean, and enabled her to range from pole to pole.

Thus does GOD, both in the operations of nature, and the administrations of providence, accomplish the most *important* ends by the most *inconsiderable* means.—When the formidable *Sisera* is to be cut off, the

* Jam. iii. 4.

† I am aware, that other expedients are used for shaping a proper course on the ocean; such as making observations from the sun by mathematical instruments. But these, I believe, are only subordinate aids to the needle. The *grand* regulator is the magnet. I have heard an experienced sailor declare, he would rather be without his *quadrant*, than without his *com-*

pass.

the blow shall be given, not by some puissant champion, but by the hand of a woman *. When *Jericho* is to be demolished, those impregnable fortifications shall fall, not beneath the stroke of battering engines, but before the sound of rams horns † —When a hundred thousand *Midianites* are to be routed, the LORD of hosts will gain this signal victory, not by numerous legions completely armed, but by a handful of *Israelites*, accoutred only with trumpets, lamps, and pitchers ‡ —Who would have thought, that from the root of *Jesse*, a root out of a dry ground, should arise that great tree, which *stretches her boughs unto the sea, and her height unto the heavens, and her branches unto the ends of the earth?* That the despised *Galilean* and the carpenter's son should be the SAVIOUR of the world, and the HEIR of all things? Nay, that a person, humbled like the meanest of slaves, and executed like the vilest of malefactors; nailed to a cross, and laid prostrate among the dead; that HE should restore life and immortality to ruined sinners; should open the gates of grace and glory on lost mankind? That a few *illiterate* creatures, taken from the barge, the oar, and the net, should confute philosophers, and convert kings; should overthrow the strong holds of idolatry, and plant *Christianity* on its ruins!—This is a circumstance, which, though a stumbling-block to some people, has considerably strengthened my faith. It is perfectly agreeable to the ALMIGHTY's manner. It is (if I may so speak) the distinguishing *turn* of his hand, and the peculiar *style* of his works. Whence does he raise the charmingly-beauteous flower? whence the magnificent myriads of the forest-oaks? whence the boundless and inestimable stores of the harvest? From principles which bear not the least proportion to their effects.--Besides, this most emphatically speaks THE GOD. It *shews the lighting down*

* Judg. iv. 9. † Josh. vi. 3. ‡ Judg. vii. 19.

of his glorious arm *; and absolutely precludes all the pretensions of human arrogance, or finite power. It appropriates the honour to that supreme AGENT, before whom the *easy* and the *arduous* are both alike. All men that see it must confess, THIS HATH GOD DONE.

Through this channel, are imported to our island the choice productions, and the peculiar treasures of every nation under heaven. So that we can breakfast upon a dissolution of the *American* kernel †; and see the rich nutrimental liquor froth in our cups, without ever tempting the foaming brine. We can steep the delicately-flavoured *Chinese* leaf, in the waters of our own well; or spend the afternoon in our own parlour, and be regaled with an infusion of the finely-scented *Arabian* berry. We can season the friendly bowl with the juices of the *orange*, or refresh our clammy palate with the pulp of the *tamarind;* without feeling that fervent heat, which imparts such a poignant relish to the former; without suffering those scorching beams, which gave a fever-cooling virtue to the latter. We can pile upon our salvers a pyramid of *Italian* figs; fill the interstices with the sky-dried raisins of *Malaga;* and form a summit for the inviting structure, with the *pistacia nut* of *Aleppo*.——By this means, the eastern spices exhale their odours on our tables; and the western canes transfuse their sweetness into our viands. We clothe our bodies with the vegetable fleeces ‡ of the south, and line our apparel

* Is. xxx. 30.

† Called the *cacoa*, which affords the principal ingredient of *chocolate*, and grows on a small tree in *America*.

‡ *Cotton*, which is a sort of wool, encompassing the seed of a tree.—Its fruit is of an oval form, about the size of a nut. As it ripens, it grows black on the out-side; and, by the heat of the sun, opens in several places, discovering the cotton through the clefts, which is of an admirable whiteness. See CHAMB. *Dict.*

apparel with warm furry ſpoils from the north. We can wear the pearl poliſhed in the abyſſes of the *Perſian* gulf; and walk on the carpets manufactured in the dominions of the *Great Mogul;* yet neither expoſe ourſelves to the rage of boiſterous ſeas, nor the more dreaded treachery of barbarous people.—In ſhort, by this grand and beneficial expedient of navigation, every tide conveys into our ports the wealth of the remoteſt climes, and brings the abundance of the univerſe to be unladen on our quays. *London* becomes a mart of nations; and almoſt every private houſe in the kingdom, is embelliſhed or accommodated from the four quarters of the globe.

Almoſt every private houſe—Is not this more like rhetorical flouriſh, than real truth? Are not all the advantages I have mentioned, the peculiar portion of the rich? Is not the ſea, like high life and the gay world, ſomewhat *capricious* and *partial?* beſtowing laviſhly her favours on the wealthy, at the ſame time that ſhe neglects the needy?—Quite the reverſe. Like her moſt exalted yet moſt condeſcending CREATOR, ſhe is no reſpecter of perſons. She deals out her liberalities to all; to the wealthy, ſuch as are ſuitable to their circumſtances; to the indigent, ſuch as are beſt adapted to their condition. If ſhe ornaments the abodes of the firſt, ſhe employs the hands of the laſt; furniſhes *theſe* with uſeful labour, *thoſe* with elegant accommodations. What a multitude of induſtrious people acquire a livelihood, by preparing the commodities intended for exportation! and what a multitude of dextrous artificers maintain their families, by manufacturing the wares imported from abroad!

It is reckoned a valuable ſpecies of beneficence to provide proper work for the poor. This withdraws them from many temptations, and preſerves them from much wickedneſs. It hinders them from being a burden to themſelves, and a nuiſance to the public. They might otherwiſe be *idle*, and as vermin on the body-

body-politic; or even *mutinous*, and as vipers in the bowels of the nation. Whereas, by exerting themselves in a due subordination, and with becoming diligence, they are the very sinews of the community; or like the grand wheel in the machine of state, whose incessant activity distributes plenty, and pours innumerable conveniencies through the whole.—What a *master* then, or rather what a *mistress*, is the sea! how extensive her correspondence, and how large her demand for workmen! Into what branch of trade does she not enter? What kind of ingenious science, or useful toil, does she not befriend? How many millions of honest but needy persons are engaged in her service? And how amply are they repaid for their pains!—*They that go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.* They also that dwell among their own people, and abide in the villages, even they enjoy the bounty, and share the advantages of the ocean. For, though it is false philosophy, to suppose the waters *themselves* strained thro' subterranean passages, into the inland countries; yet it is an undeniable truth, that their beneficial *effects* are transfused into every town, every hamlet, and every cottage.

Surely, the inhabitants of our isle have reason to turn the prediction of *Moses*, concerning the tribe of *Joseph*, into a devout and grateful acknowledgment.—*Blessed of the LORD is * our land. Blessed with the precious things of heaven, with the dew, and with the deep that coucheth beneath. With the precious things brought forth by the sun, and with the precious things thrust*

* *Is*, (so I would translate the original,) not *be*; in the *predictive*, not precatory form. This implies a fulness of faith, and distinguishes prophecy from prayer; best suits the extraordinary illumination of *Moses*; and does most honour to the omnificent SPIRIT.

thruſt forth by the moon. With the chief things of the ancient mountains, and with the precious things of the everlaſting hills: and with the precious things of the earth, and the fulneſs thereof *.—May we alſo enjoy *the good-will of HIM, who dwelt in the buſh* †, and the grace of HIM, who hung on the tree! May the eternal GOD be our refuge, and his everlaſting arms underneath both us and our intereſts!—Happy then wilt thou be, thrice happy, O *England!* Thy temporal advantages, and thy ſpiritua lprivileges conſidered, it may truly be ſaid, *Who*, or what nation, *is like unto thee?*

This

* *Deut.* xxxiii. 13, 14, 15, 16. Here ſeems to be an exact ſummary, and a poetical deſcription of the riches of nature.—*The precious things of heaven;* or *rain*, which deſcends from the upper; and *dew*, which is formed in the lower, regions of the firmament.—*The deep that coucheth beneath;* ſeas, rivers, fountains, wells, which lie in the boſom of the ſoil; and are ſources of fertility and plenty.—*The precious things brought forth by the ſun*, muſt certainly denote the herbs, plants, trees, and all manner of *vegetables*, with their reſpective fruits.—*The precious things thruſt forth by the moon*, may probably refer to the *mineral* kingdoms; in the formation of which, that ruler of the night may have a conſiderable influence. The moon is confeſſedly the parent of tides; and may put in motion thoſe bituminous and ſaline fluids, which, circulating thro' the pores of the earth, and fixing in beds of homogeneous matter, are ſuppoſed to commence minerals.—As our ſacred philoſopher has already ſpecified the vegetable tribes, and (if I miſtake not) the beds of foſſils, *the principal things of the mountains and hills*, ſhould ſignify the ſheep, goats, and other valuable animals, which feed upon thoſe vaſt declivities. Then, *the precious things of the earth*, may expreſs thoſe herds of larger cattle, which have their paſturage in the plains, valleys, and lower grounds. A ſenſe, which recommends itſelf from this conſideration, that the wealth of the ancients conſiſted chiefly in cattle.—*The fulneſs thereof*, may be a kind of recapitulation: a comprehenſive term, including the whole produce of the terraqueous globe; the *magnificent liberality of* JEHOVAH to his people.

† Deut. xxxiii. 16.

This for my country; now let me wish for myself;

GOD of all worlds! source and supreme of things!
From whom all life, from whom duration springs!
Intense O! let me for thy glory burn,
Nor fruitless view my days and months return.
Give me with wonder at thy works to glow,
To grasp thy vision, and thy truths to know:
O'er time's tempestuous sea to reach thy shore,
And live, and sing, where time shall be no more.

You see, *Aspasio*, I have been studying the volume of nature; endeavouring to read its capital characters, and learn some of its instructive lessons. The sea has been the page; but how *superficial* is my perusal, and no less *scanty* my knowledge. Little, very little have I seen or conceived, relating to those works of wonder, which the vast unfathomable deep contains *;—the plants it produces, and the creatures it nourishes;—its stupendous rocks, and subterranean caves;—the heaps of pearl, which are its native growth; and the loads of gold, which it has gained by shipwreck.—*So* superficial are my views of *CHRIST; so* scanty is my acquaintance with the gospel.

You, I presume, are sitting at the feet of that sublime TEACHER; and attending to the dictates of *HIS* mouth, in *whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge* †. Let me promise myself a communication of *your* thoughts, as I have freely transmitted a specimen of *mine*. And I will make no scruple to acknowledge

* Should the reader desire to see this subject more largely opened, and more fully improved, I would refer him to *Contemplations on the ocean*, lately published by my ingenious and pious friend Mr *Pearsall*. In which, a refined fancy and a delicate philosophy, compose a chaplet for evangelical divinity: uniting some of their beautiful, and fragrant flowers, to adorn the gospel of GOD our SAVIOUR,—to quicken and refresh the spirits of his people,—to invite and win the hearts of the disobedient.

† Col. ii. 3.

knowledge the ſuperiority of the exchange; that I receive

Χρυσια χαλκιων, εκατομβοι ενναβοιων.

Or, as the eloquent *Iſaiah* ſpeaks; *For braſs you will bring gold, and for iron you will bring ſilver* *; rendering me, by this intercourſe, your more *obliged*, though it is ſcarce poſſible for me to be more than I already am,

Your affectionate,

THERON.

P. S. Monſieur *Paſchal*, who was remarkably fond of *brevity*, makes an odd excuſe for tranſgreſſing, on a particular occaſion, his favourite rule. He intreats his friend to pardon the unuſual length of his epiſtle, by aſſuring him, *that he had not time to make it ſhorter.* —I cannot, it muſt be confeſſed, adopt this philoſopher's apology. For I have purpoſely lengthened my letter, with a view of ſetting, in this *one* circumſtance, a pattern for my *Aſpaſio*.

* Iſ. lx. 17.

LETTER X.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

I Thank you for your *letter*, becauſe it entertains and improves me: I thank you for your *poſtſcript*, becauſe it is my encouragement and my apology.—I am ſet down to write, with a copious ſtock of materials. It will be far more difficult to contract, than to enlarge. I muſt therefore acknowledge myſelf obliged to your candour, for aſſigning me the *eaſier* taſk.—That prolixity, which, in others, might be ungenteel and faulty, is, in me, an act of complaiſance, and matter of duty.

Though absent from you, I went with you in your late ramble. Your descriptive pen has made me partaker of the *ideal delight:* may divine grace enable me to share in the *spiritual improvement!*—When you displayed the beauties of the morn, breaking forth from the obscurity of night; when you adopted that noble aspiration from our philosophic poet, I could not forbear adding,—"Thus may the gracious GOD, who "commands the light to shine out of the midnight-"darkness, shine into our hearts; and give that *in-"comparably-glorious* knowledge, the knowledge of "his blessed SELF! which, tho' discernable through "all the tracts of creation, and derivable from every "work of his almighty hand; yet no where beams "forth with such *complete* and such *amiable* lustre, as "in the person of *JESUS CHRIST* *."—Here we behold all the sublime perfections of the DEITY, not only manifested with inimitable splendor, but operating for our own advantage. We behold them, as *Job* speaks, *for ourselves* †; and cannot but receive inexpressible refreshment and joy from the view.

When you walked beneath the shade of those huge, horrid, and enormous cliffs; both amused and alarmed at their stupendous magnitude, and frightful irregularity;—when you cast your eye upon the wide-expanded surface of the ocean;—when you surveyed the far more unmeasurable arches of the sky;—and meditated, in that awful solitude, on the wildest and most magnificent appearances of nature;—I felt the same kind of devout astonishment with yourself. While the soul was wrapt in *pensive stillness*, and *pleasing dread* ‡, methought I heard a voice, or something like

* 2 Cor. iv. 6. † Job xix. 27.

‡ It seems to have been such a kind, not of *anxious* but of *pleasing* dread, which seized the disciples on the mount of transfiguration: ηδειν γαρ εκφοβοι, for they were struck with a profound, but delightful awe. *Delightful*, otherwise it is not easy to conceive, why *Peter* should propose to *build tabernacles* there, or how he could wish to continue in those circumstances, *Mark* ix. 6.

like a voice, from the ſilent ſpheres, as well as from the ſounding ſeas. It ſeemed to echo back, what the mighty angel, whom *John* ſaw flying in the midſt of heaven, once proclaimed; "*Worſhip HIM, who made* "*heaven and earth, and the ſea, and the fountains of* "*water* *. Worſhip him, who ſtretched out that "azure pavilion with ſuch amazing grandeur; who "meaſured yonder world of waters, in the hollow "of his hand; and before whom, this immenſe range "of mountainous cliffs, is but as duſt upon the ſcale."

When you deſcribed the *diſmal ſituation* of a wretch, expoſed on the edges of the tremendous precipice; hanging over the ragged rocks, and the unfathomable gulf; and cleaving only to a ſlender, treacherous, breaking bough: how heartily did I join in your adoring acknowledgments to that kind, interpoſing, bleſſed hand, which reſcued us both from an infinitely more threatening and dreadful danger! reſcued us, as *ſlaves*, from the dominion of the devil; ſnatched us, as *brands*, from the inextinguiſhable burnings; and bid us (O marvellous, ſuperabundant goodneſs!) bid us poſſeſs the *liberty* of righteouſneſs; bid us inherit the *kingdom* of heaven.

When you mention the paſt indolence, and the preſent fervour of your prayers, I could not forbear reiterating my praiſes to GOD on your behalf. This is a proof, my dear *Theron*, that you are going in the way everlaſting; for it is written, *They ſhall come with weeping, and with ſupplications will I lead them* †. This is the work of the HOLY GHOST, dwelling in your heart; for what ſaith the ſcripture? *I will pour upon them the ſpirit of grace and of ſupplication* ‡. And our LORD himſelf mentions this, as the indication of a true converſion; *Behold he prayeth* ‖.—Had not *Saul* prayed before? Yes; and made long prayers too.

* Rev. xiv. 7.
† Jer. xxxi. 9.
‖ Acts ix. 11.
‡ Zech. xii. 10.

too. But he never, till that inſtant, was ſenſible of his undone and damnable condition; never cried to GOD from the depths of his diſtreſs, or from the depths of his heart; nor ever ſolicited the throne of grace, in the all-prevailing name of *JESUS CHRIST*. —His prayers, till then, were ſomewhat like the *motes*, which fluctuate to and fro in the air, without any vigorous impulſe, or any certain aim. But, in that hour, they were like the *arrow*, which ſprings from the ſtrained bow, and, quick as lightning, flies to the mark.

I was pleaſed to find you, in the proceſs of your letter, inſenſibly forgetting the narrative: and ſo engaged by the ſubject, that you ſpoke not as the *relater*, but as the *beholder*.—Thus may we always be affected, when we ſtudy the oracles of truth; ſtudy them, not as cold unconcerned critics, who are only to judge of their meaning, but as perſons *deeply intereſted* in all they contain; who are particularly addreſſed in every exhortation, and directed by every precept; whoſe are the promiſes, and to whom belong the precious privileges.—When we are enabled thus to *realize* and *appropriate* the contents of that invaluable book; then we ſhall taſte the ſweetneſs, and feel the power of the ſcriptures. Then we ſhall know, by happy experience, that our divine MASTER's words, are not barely ſounds and ſyllables, but *they are ſpirit, and they are life* *.

I was ſtill more agreeably entertained with your picture of *commerce*, and of the advantages we receive from *navigation*. One advantage, however, I can ſpecify, which is greater than any, greater than all, you have celebrated: an advantage, which will endear and ennoble navigation, ſo long as the ſun and moon endure. The goſpel, my dear friend, the *glorious goſpel* came to our iſland through this channel. The volume that comprizes it, and the preacher that publiſhed it, both

* John vi. 63.

both were imported by shipping. And may we not say, with the enraptured *Isaiah? How beautiful are the feet of them that bring good tidings; that publish peace; that bring good tidings of good; that publish salvation; that say unto Zion, Thy GOD reigneth* *! It is pleasant to hear their voice; pleasant to contemplate their message; and pleasant even to behold the ground on which they trod, or the very waves over which they sailed.—This made the holy prophet rejoice in spirit, when he foresaw the extensive spread of his MASTER's glory, and the certain commencement of *our* happiness. This put into his mouth that affectionate and congratulatory address; which, in a very particular manner, is directed to us and our countrymen: *Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the ends of the earth: ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; ye isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the LORD; and declare his praise in the islands* †.

We

* *Is.* lii. 7. Never did language bespeak an *enraptured* soul, more significantly than this sacred exclamation. The prophet is all wonder and all joy. He is so enamoured with his subject, and so captivated with the glory of the *gospel*, that he can never say enough of its excellencies.—*Good tidings;* the very best, that earth could receive, or heaven proclaim. *Good tidings of good;* a most comprehensive good; a collection of every blessing; or all good things in one. *Publish peace;* peace with GOD, the everlasting King; and that sweet peace of conscience, which the whole world cannot give. *Publish salvation;* or that gift of righteousness which is the meritorious cause, together with that spirit of liberty and spirit of adoption, which are the rich and grand constituents of salvation. *That say unto Zion, Thy GOD reigneth;* not sin and Satan, not lust and appetite, oppressive tyrants and worse than *Egyptian* task-masters; but the all-wise and infinitely gracious JEHOVAH; he, even he setteth up his pure, his peaceful, his spiritual kingdom, in the believer's heart, in the *Gentile* nations, and in all lands.

† Is. xlii. 10, 11, 12.

We read, in *Ezekiel*, of the *moſt magnificent* fleet that ever ploughed the ſeas. The maſts were of cedar †, and the benches of ivory. Fine linen, beautified with embroidery, floated to the winds, and formed the ſails. Blue and purple rigged the veſſel, and clothed the meaneſt mariner.—Let us ſuppoſe, that the freight of this ſplended navy was proportioned, in value, to its ſumptuous tackling. Yet how poor, how deſpicable were either, were both, if eſtimated with the treaſures of the goſpel; thoſe *divine treaſures*, which ſpring from the imputation of our REDEEMER's righteouſneſs! and which have much the ſame kindly influence on *religious practice*, as navigation, with all her improvements, has upon traffic!—Give me leave to confirm this aſſertion, by ſelecting a few inſtances, and applying them in a few interrogatories.

One of the benefits proceeding from the imputation of *CHRIST*'s righteouſneſs, is *pardon;* pardon, not partial, but complete; a pardon of each ſin, be it ever ſo *hainous;* a pardon of all ſins, be they ever ſo *numerous*. For thus ſaith GOD the LORD, who ſent both his prophets and apoſtles, preaching peace by *JESUS CHRIST*, *I will pardon* ALL *their iniquities, whereby they have ſinned, and whereby they have tranſgreſſed againſt me* ‡.—To learn the deſirable nature of this bleſſing, let us ſtep back into the annals of hiſtory, and attend a traiterous unhappy nobleman to his *vindictive* exit. His body is demanded by the miniſters of juſtice. Reluctant and trembling he is conducted to the ſcaffold. There the alarmed criminal ſees the mourning block; ſees the glittering axe; ſees the coffin prepared for his corpſe; ſees thouſands of anxious ſpectators, waiting, with eager looks and throbbing hearts, the fearful cataſtrophe. In a word, he

† Ezek. xxvii. 5, &c. ‡ Jer. xxxiii. 8.

he sees death advancing, with all the solemnities of *horror* and *woe*.—Time elapses. The preparatory ceremonies are dispatched. The fatal moment is arrived. No longer respite can be allowed. He must submit to immediate execution. Accordingly he prostrates himself to receive the stroke. But—seized with new terrors, at the poised axe, and approaching blow, he starts from the dangerous posture.—Again he bends, and again snatches his neck from the impending edge. A third time he lifts his pale countenance, to the pitying crouds, and departing light.—Once more he bows to the block, and once more raises his head, in *wishful expectation* of the royal clemency.—Had a messenger appeared, at the critical instant, with a shout of joy upon his tongue, and a sealed pardon in his hand; O! how transporting the news! *inexpressibly welcome* the favour!—What was denied to his passionate desires, denied to the importunate solicitations of his friends, is freely offered to us in the gospel of *CHRIST*: a pardon of infinitely-higher consequence, which obliterates millions and millions of rebellious acts; which extends its blessed effects, not merely through the little span of life, but beyond the gates of the grave,—beyond the boundaries of time,—through all the ages of eternity.

How unfathomable is that immense flood, on which my *Theron* lately exercised his contemplation! The toiling plummets, with all their length of cordage, are unable to find a bottom. Were the hugest millstones, or the highest towers, or the most spacious cities, cast into that prodigious gulf, they would be totally overwhelmed, and irrecoverably lost. Therefore the inspired prophet, to shew the *boundless* extent of the divine mercies in *JESUS CHRIST*, and to denote the *fulness* of their pardon who are cleansed in the REDEEMER's blood, hath illustrated both by this grand similitude: *Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths*

depths of the sea *;—not one, or a few, but *all* their sins;—not barely behind thy back, but into the *sea;*—and not into the shallow parts, but in the very *depths* of the ocean;—so that they shall never rise up in judgment; never be taken notice of; no, nor ever be remembered any more.

With an act of total indemnity, let us join in a thorough *restoration* to *favour*.—If the wrath of an earthly king be as *the roaring of a lion* †; how much more tremendous is *his* indignation, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell! If the favour of an earthly sovereign be *as dew upon the grass;* how much more desirable and delightful HIS loving-kindness, whom all things in heaven and earth obey!—By the righteousness of *JESUS CHRIST*, we are freed from all foreboding apprehensions of the former, and established in the comfortable possession of the latter. The gospel renews and ratifies that joyful proclamation of the angelic host, *Peace on earth, and good-will to men* ‡. GOD is not only pacified towards believers, but well pleased with them in his dear SON. They are the objects of his complacential delight, and he rejoices over them to do them good.

Nay, they are made children, *sons and daughters of the LORD almighty* ‖; and if sons, then heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with *CHRIST* ⊥.—The chief captain mentioned in the *Acts*, purchased his freedom of the imperial city *Rome*, with a great sum of money ++. If such a little transient immunity was so valuable in his esteem, who can express the worth, who can conceive the dignity, of this divine adoption? Yet it belongs to those who receive the gospel, and are interested in *CHRIST*.—They have access to the omnipotent BEING; such free and welcome access, as a beloved child to an indulgent father. To him they may fly for aid, in every difficulty; and from him obtain

* Mic. vii. 19. † Prov. xix. 12. ‡ Luke ii. 14.
‖ 2 Cor. vi. 18. ⊥ Rom. viii. 17. ++ Acts xxii. 28.

tain a ſupply, in all their wants.—GOD, as the ſacred charter runs, IS THEIR GOD. All his lovely, all his adorable perfections, are their glorious inheritance, and exceeding great reward. That eternal power, to which nothing is impoſſible, exerts itſelf as their *guard;* and that unerring wiſdom, from which nothing is concealed, acts as their *guide*. His very juſtice is no longer an incenſed adverſary, demanding vengeance or meditating deſtruction; but a faithful *guarantee*, to provide for the punctual execution of the REDEEMER's treaty, and their complete enjoyment of its various bleſſings.—What a privilege is this! Rather what a *cluſter* of privileges is here! Weigh the kingdoms of the world; caſt all the glories of them into the ſcale; and they will be found, when compared with theſe divine prerogatives, *emptier* than the bubble that burſts, *lighter* than the ſpark that expires.

In the goſpel are given exceeding great and precious promiſes. Of ſuch *value*, that they were procured by the blood of *CHRIST;* of ſuch *certainty*, that they are ratified by the oath * of JEHOVAH. So *durable*, that, though all fleſh is graſs, and all the goodlineſs thereof as the flower of the graſs, this word of our GOD abideth for ever †; ſo *efficacious*, that there are no ſuch cordials to revive our fainting, and no ſuch bulwarks to ſecure our endangered ſouls. With theſe the Bible is as richly repleniſhed, as the clear midnight-ſky is beſpangled with ſtars. They *are all yea and amen*, conſigned over as a ſure unalienable portion, *to them that are in JESUS CHRIST* ‡.

Another benefit, given in conſequence of the REDEEMER's righteouſneſs, is the *ſanctifying* SPIRIT. A moſt comprehenſive bleſſing this! Our SAVIOUR intimates, that it includes every heavenly gift, is an aſſemblage of all good things ‖.—How ſingular

* Heb. vi. 17. † 1 Pet. i. 23.
‡ 2 Cor. i. 20. ‖ Compare *Matth.* vii. 11. with *Luke* xi. 13.

gular a comfort muſt it be to blind *Bartimeus*, to have his eyes opened, and behold the all chearing light of the ſun *! So, and far more comfortable, are the enlightening influences of the bleſſed SPIRIT, when they ſhine upon the wretched creature, who ſits in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death. How peculiar a mercy for the impure and abhorred *leper*, to be healed of his inveterate diſeaſe! to feel the ſoothing ſenſations of eaſe, where ſores rankled and pain raged! Inſtead of enfeebling languors and loathſome deformity, vigour braces his limbs, and comelineſs blooms in his countenance †. Equally benign and equally ſalubrious, is the agency of the divine SPIRIT, on our depraved, polluted, ſenſual minds.—How ſignal was the recovery, and how welcome the change! when that unhappy creature, ſo wildly agitated by a *miſchievous demon*, was reinſtated in the peaceful poſſeſſion of himſelf and his faculties! when, inſtead of unnaturally cutting his own fleſh, or committing barbarous outrages on innocent travellers, he ſat compoſed and attentive at the feet of *JESUS* ‡! receiving heavenly inſtruction from his lips, and learning the meekneſs of wiſdom from his example. So ſalutary and beneficial is the transforming power of the HOLY GHOST the Comforter; ſoftening the rugged, ſweetening the moroſe, and calming the paſſionate temper.—It is undoubtedly the utmoſt improvement, and the higheſt happineſs of our nature, to have the image of the bleſſed GOD reinſtamped on our hearts. This is an earneſt, and an anticipation alſo, of endleſs felicity: a *bud* which will open in heaven, and ſpread into immortal glory: a *dawn* which will ſhine more and more, till the Sun of Righteouſneſs ariſes, and brightens it into everlaſting day. This bud the ſanctifying SPIRIT ingrafts, this dawn the grace of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST* diffuſes, in the barren and benighted ſoul.

In

* Mark x. 52. † Matth. viii. 3. ‡ Mark v. 15.

In a word, receive this righteouſneſs, and you have a title to all bleſſings, whether they be preſent or future, bodily or ſpiritual, temporal or eternal. From the neceſſary conveniencies of bread to eat, and raiment to put on; even to the crowns of glory, and the fulneſs of joy; *all*, *all*, are owing to our REDEEMER's righteouſneſs.—You ſee now, *Theron*, that our ſcheme has no tendency to impoveriſh your ſpiritual condition, or diminiſh your true riches; any more than thoſe tracts of water, which ſurround our iſland, are detrimental to the wealth of its inhabitants. Detrimental! No; they are an inexhauſtible ſource of treaſure. They convey to our uſe the choiceſt accommodations, and the moſt elegant delights; ſuch as would in vain be expected, if the whole ocean was converted into the fineſt meads, and moſt fertile paſtures. *So*—but to apply this compariſon, would foreſtal your principal queſtion.

"Do not theſe favours, though unſpeakably pre-
"cious in themſelves, tend to the introduction or ſup-
"port of ungodlineſs?"—Quite the reverſe. Have we *redemption* through our *SAVIOUR*'s blood, even the forgiveneſs of our ſins? We are redeemed, not that we may ſink in ſupineneſs, or launch into licentiouſneſs, but that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works *.—Are we made the *children* of GOD? Then let our light ſo ſhine before men, that others, ſeeing our good works, may glorify our FATHER which is in heaven †. This is the genuine conſequence of ſuch a doctrine, and the proper effect of ſuch a benefit.—Are we veſted with ſacred *privileges!* Theſe admoniſh us, theſe urge us, to walk worthy of HIM, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory ‡. Shall the citizens of heaven be animated with no higher views, than the ſlaves of appetite, and drudges of the world?—Are we conſtituted *heirs* of the *promiſes?* The grace which they aſcertain, is in-

* Tit. ii. 14. † Matth. v. 16. ‡ 1 Theſſ. ii. 12.

tended to make us partakers of a divine nature *; and the encouragement which they administer, incites us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, incites us to perfect holiness in the fear of GOD †.—Such high immunities are a most endearing persuasive, not to disgrace, but magnify, not to provoke, but please, their unspeakably-beneficent AUTHOR.

I might farther observe, that holiness is one of the most distinguished blessings in our system: nay, is the very *central* blessing, to which all the others verge; in which they all terminate.—Were we *chosen* from eternity?—It was for this purpose, that we may be holy and unblameable in love ‡.—Are we *called* in time? It is to this intent, that we may shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light ‖.—Are we *created again in CHRIST JESUS?* It is, to capacitate us for acceptable service, and to furnish us unto every good work ⸸. *I will put my spirit within you, saith the LORD.* For what end? *That ye may walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them* +. Here comes in my *Theron*'s favourite endowment, sincere obedience. Far, very far from discarding sincere obedience, we would only introduce it, under its due character, and in its proper order. *Under its due character;* as the fruit, not the cause, of our interest in *CHRIST*'s righteousness. *In its due order;* as following, not preceding, the gift of justification.

These privileges, my dear friend, are salutary, as the pool of *Bethesda* ++. They are restorative, as the waters of *Siloam* ++: or like that sacred stream flowing from the *sanctuary;* which healed the rivers, healed the sea, and made even the desert flourish ==.—If justification by the righteousness of *CHRIST* had a tendency to subvert the foundation of holiness, to confirm

* 2 Pet. i. 4. ‖ 1 Pet. ii. 9. + John v. 4.
† 2 Cor. vii. 1. ⸸ Eph. ii. 10. ++ John ix. 7.
‡ Eph. i. 4. + Ezek. xxxvi 27. == Ezek. xlvii. 8, 9.

firm the hypocritical professor in his neglect of moral duties, or discourage the sincere convert from the pursuit of real virtue; it would, doubtless, be unworthy of any acceptation, or rather worthy of universal abhorrence. But I dare appeal, not only to the nature of the doctrine, and the reason of things, but to the experience of all;—yes, of all who *have tasted, that the LORD is gracious* *. "Speak, ye who are "enabled to believe, that GOD is reconciled; has received the all-satisfying atonement; and placed his "SON's righteousness to your account! that he regards "you as his children, and will receive you to his glory! "—Have you not, under *such* convictions, felt your "hearts exulting with conscious joy; and every "power of your souls springing forward, to glorify "your heavenly FATHER,—glorify him by every "instance of obedience, fidelity, and zeal?"

Can such invaluable benefits have a prejudicial influence on our practice, if, to the consideration of their superlative worth, we add that *unequalled price*, by which they were purchased?—HE who is high above all height, humbled himself to be made of a woman, and born in a stable; that we might be admitted into the family of GOD, and exalted to the mansions of heaven. And will this great humiliation, which is the basis of our happiness, prompt us to look down with *contempt* on others, or entertain *arrogant* thoughts of ourselves?

The ONLY BEGOTTEN and the supreme delight of the FATHER, was numbered with transgressors, and ranked with felons; that we might be joined to the innumerable company of angels, and associated with saints in glory everlasting. And will any one make this a precedent or a plea, for *walking in the counsel of the ungodly; for standing in the way of sinners; or sitting in the seat of the scornful* †?

All manner of evil was spoken of the faultless JESUS;

* 1 Pet. ii. 3. † Psal. i. 1.

SUS; his bleſſed name was vilified by blaſpheming tongues, and his unblameable conduct blackened with the fouleſt aſperſions; on purpoſe that we may be applauded, when we are judged; and each hear thoſe tranſporting words, WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT *! Will this embolden us to *diſhonour* our LORD, and *ſtain* our holy profeſſion? Shall we from hence be induced to open the mouths of his enemies, and furniſh them with occaſion to ſpeak reproachfully?

HE went, galled with the laſhes of the ſcourge, and penetrated with the pungent thorns; he went, loaded with the execrable croſs, and marking the way with his precious blood; *thus* he went to his ignominious and tormenting exit; that we may enter into *Zion* with ſongs of triumph on our lips, and with everlaſting joy on our heads. Does this invite us to go, crowned with roſe-buds, to the houſe of *riot;* or go, muffled in diſguiſe, to the *midnight-revel*? Will it not rather incline us, to ſit down at his pierced feet, and bathe them with our tears, and take delight † in mourning for our crucified LORD?

Behold! he hangs on the curſed tree. There, there he hangs; rent with wounds, and racked with pain. He pours his groans, and ſpills his blood. He bows his head, his patient princely head, and dies—aſtoniſhing, raviſhing conſideration! he dies for *you* and *me*. And will this harden our hearts, or arm our hands, to crucify him afreſh by any allowed iniquity? Does

* Matth. xxv. 21.

† The ſorrow, ariſing from ſuch tender and grateful views of the crucified *JESUS*, is that evangelical godly ſorrow, which *worketh repentance unto ſalvation not to be repented of*, 2 Cor. vii. 10. And is there not reaſon,—when we conſider the pains he felt, the curſe he bore, and the blood he ſhed, —is there not abundant reaſon to ſay, with *Homer*'s afflicted hero!

——————Τλήτω μὲν δὴ γυῖα.

Iliad. Y.

Does not reaſon ſuggeſt, and Chriſtianity dictate, and all that is ingenuous enforce, the apoſtle's important inference? *If one died for all, then they which live, ſhould not henceforth live unto themſelves, but unto him which died for them* *.

He thought upon us, long before the foundations of the world were laid; he remembers us, now he is exalted to the right hand of the MAJESTY in the heavens; and will never, never forget us, thro' all the revolutions of eternity. And is this a motive to forget his name; to diſregard his word; or to imitate the ſhameful neutrality and indifference of *Gallio*? Impreſſed with a ſenſe of this invariable and everlaſting kindneſs, ſurely, we ſhall declare ourſelves, as thoſe captives in *Babylon*, concerning their dear native city *Jeruſalem; If I forget thee*, O bleſſed *JESUS*, *let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth* †.

——————Remember thee!
Ay, my dear LORD, while mem'ry holds a ſeat
In this devoted breaſt—Remember thee!
Yes, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
Which youth and obſervation copied there,
And thy remembrance all alone ſhall live
Within the book and volume of my brain ‡.

Is it poſſible, *Theron*, for the contemplation of ſuch goodneſs, to weaken the motives, or relax the ſprings of obedience! As ſoon may *lenient balms* kill, and rankeſt poiſons cure.—Is ſuch a belief calculated to diſcourage duty, and patronize licentiouſneſs? Juſt as much as *vernal ſhowers* are fitted to cleave the earth with chinks, or ſummer ſuns to glaze the waters with ice.—When *Anthony* made an oration to the ſoldiers, on occaſion of *Cæſar*'s death; when he ſhewed them their honoured maſter's robe, transfixed with ſo many daggers;

* 2 Cor. v. 15, 16.
† Pſal. cxxxvii. 5, 6. ‡ SHAKESPEAR.

daggers; when he reminded them of the victories they had won, under their assassinated commander; when he farther informed them, that their murdered General had remembered them in his will,—had bequeathed all his fine gardens, and beautiful walks, to their use and delight;—heavens! how they took fire! *Revenge* sparkled in their eyes; *Revenge* flamed in their bosoms; *Revenge* was all their cry. They flew to the houses of the conspirators; laid them even with the ground; and, had they met the owners, would have tore them limb from limb.—Some such resentment against sin, will a sense of our adored REDEEMER's sufferings excite; especially when set home by his blessed SPIRIT, and considered in connection with those detestable iniquities which caused them, and with those invaluable blessings which were procured by them.—Nothing, nothing is so effectual, to beget the most *irreconcileable abhorrence* of all ungodliness, to make the remembrance of it bitter as wormwood, the temptations to it horrible as hell.

Let me remind you of an incident, related by your favourite historian *Xenophon*.—*Cyrus* had taken captive the young prince of *Armenia*, together with his beautiful and blooming princess; whom he had lately married, and of whom he was passionately fond. When both were brought to the tribunal, *Cyrus* asked the prince, what he would give to be reinstated in his kingdom?—He answered, with an air of indifference, "That, as for his crown, and *his own* liberty, he va-"lued them at a very low rate. But if *Cyrus* would "restore his beloved princess to her native dignity, "and hereditary possessions, he should infinitely re-"joice; and would pay (this he uttered with tender-"ness and ardour) would willingly *pay his life* for the "purchase."—Could such a declaration, so highly endearing, alienate the affections of the princess, or induce her to violate her fidelity? Let her own conduct

answer

anſwer the query. When all the priſoners were diſmiſſed with freedom, it is impoſſible to expreſs how they were charmed with their royal benefactor. Some celebrated his martial accompliſhments. Some applauded his ſocial virtues. All were *prodigal* of their praiſes, and *laviſh* in grateful acknowledgments. And you, ſaid the prince, (addreſſing himſelf to his bride,) what think you of *Cyrus?*—I did not obſerve him, replied the princeſs.—Not obſerve him! Upon what then was your attention fixed?—Upon that *dear* and *generous* man, who declared, "he would purchaſe "my liberty, at the expence of his very life *."—Was her heart impreſſed, were all her thoughts ingroſſed, by that benevolent *offer?* And ſhall ours be leſs affected with the incomparably more tender and endearing love of *CHRIST?*—He was not only willing, but *actually* laid down his life, for us; a life immenſely precious, and of higher dignity than all heavens. He laid down his life, not for amiable perſons, or worthy creatures, but for vile earth, and miſerable ſinners;—*purchaſing* thereby for us and our children, privileges of ineſtimable worth, and of everlaſting duration.

Will not ſuch beneficence, ſo unmerited, ſo unequalled, win † the moſt reluctant, and melt the moſt obdurate

* Ἐγὼ μὲν καὶ τῆς ψυχῆς πριαίμην ὅτι μετὰ ἡδονῆς λαβοῦσαι ταύτην. XENOPH. *de Cyri Inſtit.* lib. III.

† *Beneficia*, ſays one of the ancients, *qui invenit, compedes invenit.* Which fine ſentiment may almoſt ſerve as a comment on the beautiful and tender declaration of GOD by his prophet *Hoſea; I drew them* to obedience *with cords of a man, with bands of love*, chap. xi. 4. HE who made, and intimately knows our frame, knew that theſe motives would be moſt powerful in operation; moſt powerful on creatures, capable of love, and ſuſceptible of gratitude. Therefore he calls them, *the cords of a man*.—And if a deliverance from temporal bondage, if the ſettlement of *Iſrael* in all the plenty of *Canaan*, conſtituted ſo ſweet an incitement to duty; doubtleſs, the everlaſting benefits mentioned by *Aſpaſio*, together with all the endearing circumſtances of their procurement, muſt be abun-

obdurate heart? The heart, which is not wrought upon by this miracle of divine compaſſion, muſt be ſteel, muſt be adamant; quite impenetrable, and abſolutely incorrigible.—"O thou ever-bleſſed, thou all-gracious REDEEMER, *thy love to us is wonderful; paſſing*, I will not ſay, *the love of women* *, but the power of language, and the reach of thought! Who can hold out againſt ſuch charming attractives? who can reſiſt ſuch heavenly goodneſs?—Only let a *ſenſe* of thy love be always warm, always operative on our minds. This ſhall be inſtead of a thouſand *arguments* to engage, inſtead of ten thouſand *motives* to quicken our obedience."—Other motives may produce ſome external ſervices, or hypocritical performances. Terrors may extort the drudgery of the hand. Bribes may purchaſe the adulation of the tongue. But this conciliates the will; this proſelytes the affections; this captivates the very ſoul; and makes all its powers *like the chariots of Amminadib* †, ready, expedite, and active in duty.

Hear the holy apoſtle, giving an account of himſelf and his ſpiritual ſtate. He ſpeaks in language ſomewhat ſimilar, though greatly ſuperior, to the profeſſion of the *Armenian* princeſs.—"So great is the glory, ſo rich is the grace, ſo ſuperabundant are the merits of my REDEEMER, *that I am determined to know nothing but CHRIST JESUS and him crucified* ‡." —Aſk the ſame zealous apoſtle, *What* prompted him to ſuch indefatigable diligence, and animated him with ſuch invincible fortitude? *Why* did he decline no toil, and dread no danger; rejoice in tribulation, and glory in reproach ‖; welcome perſecution, and defy death? This

dantly more engaging.—May the SPIRIT from on high remove the *veil* of ignorance and inſenſibility! let into our hearts the knowledge and faith of theſe great evangelical truths! We ſhall then want no *farther* demonſtration, either of the propriety of the remark, or the efficacy of the principles.

* 2 Sam. i. 26. † Cant. vi. 12. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

‖ That ſupreme affection to the bleſſed *JESUS*, which reigned

This is his reply; "*The love of CHRIST constraineth* * "*me;* beareth me on, with much the same strong, "steady, prevailing influence, which winds and tide "exert, when they waft the vessel to its destined "harbour."

Shall we hear what another disciple, one of the most advanced proficients in divine love, says upon the subject? one, who learned his knowledge, not in the school of philosophy, but on his SAVIOUR's bosom? *This is the love of GOD, that we walk after his commandments* †. This is the natural fruit, this the certain evidence, of love to that glorious, transcendent, and adorable BEING. What! Not that we supinely neglect, much less that we profanely violate, his sacred precepts; but that, with assiduity and delight, we make them the rule of our conduct.—*Charity*

reigned in the hearts of his primitive disciples, could never have been so emphatically displayed by any strokes of eloquence, as by their own chearful and heroic manner of expressing themselves, with relation to their sufferings.—Far from regretting, *I take pleasure* (says the apostle) *in afflictions;* and embrace them, when occurring in my divine MASTER's service, with a real complacency, ευδοκω. 2 Cor. xii. 10.—*To you*, adds the same apostle, and speaks in a congratulatory strain, *it is given* (εχαρισθη) as a desirable privilege, *to suffer* for the adorable *JESUS*, Philip. i. 29.—St *Luke*, recording the abusive and cruel outrages, committed on two disciples, for preaching boldly in the name of *CHRIST*, uses a phrase remarkably gallant and spirited; *They departed from the council rejoicing*, οτι κατηξιωθησαν ατιμασθηναι, *that they were counted worthy to suffer shame;* had the *honour* of being *vilified* and *reproached*, in so venerable and glorious a cause.—This passage is a fine exemplification of the figure, which rhetoricians style *Oxymorum*. And *Horace*'s—*Dulce periculum—Splendide mendax—Quo beatus vulnere*—seem flat and jejune upon the comparison, *Acts* v. 41.

* Could you station a coward in the midst of a numerous *army* advancing to the battle; or rather, could you place a boat on the impetuous cataracts of the *Nile;* you would *see* what is meant by the significant word, συνεχει. 2 Cor v. 14.

† 2 John *ver.* 6.

ty edifyeth *: this divine love, far from razing the foundations, far from demoliſhing the ſtructure, *buildeth up* † the fair fabric of univerſal godlineſs.

Let me borrow an illuſtration from your own letter. When a pebble is caſt into the ſmooth canal, it moves the centre, and forms a circle. The firſt creates a ſecond; the ſecond breaks into a third; they continue to multiply and expand themſelves, till the whole ſurface is covered with circular undulations. Thus, the love of an all-gracious REDEEMER ‡, when *ſhed abroad in the ſoul by the HOLY GHOST* ||, will diffuſe itſelf through every intellectual faculty, and

* 1 Cor. viii. 1. † Οικοδομει.

‡ I cannot but think, the reaſoning is much more juſt, and the principle much more efficacious, in *Aſpaſio*'s manner of ſtating the affair, than in the following famous lines:

Self love but ſerves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the ſmall pebble ſtirs the peaceful lake:
The centre mov'd, a circle ſtrait ſucceeds,
Another ſtill, and ſtill another ſpreads.
Friend, parent, neighbour, firſt it will embrace,
His country next, and next all human race:
Wide and more wide th' o'erflowings of the mind
Take every creature in of every kind.

Self-love too often acts on the affections, as a blaſt on the leaves, *ſhrivels* and *contracts* them. But the love of *CHRIST*, like a vernal ſun on the tender buds, *opens* and *expands* them; till they become wide, as the extent of his gracious redemption; wide, as the compaſs of his rational creation.—By ſelf-love I am almoſt neceſſarily determined to *malign* the perſons, who croſs my inclinations and obſtruct my intereſts. From the love of *CHRIST*, I have a cogent reaſon, and a moſt prevailing inducement to love my very *enemies*.—How does St *Peter* analyze this ſubject? not in Mr *Pope*'s, not in Lord *Bolingbroke*'s method. *Godlineſs*, or a ſupreme love to the gracious GOD, he repreſents as the root or *trunk*; then *brotherly kindneſs*, or an affectionate regard to relations, friends, neighbours, as ſome of the grand and maſter-*branches*; after this *charity*, or a diffuſive good-will to all mankind, as the ſpread of *boughs*, which complete and adorn the tree, 2 *Pet.* i. 7. || Rom. v. 5.

and extend to every ſpecies of duty. Till the whole heart is filled with the image, and the whole behaviour regulated by the law of the bleſſed GOD.—So that I am perſuaded, there is a great deal of truth and ſolidity, as every one muſt acknowledge, there is a peculiar ſpirit and beauty, in the apoſtrophe of our poet;

Talk they of morals? O thou bleeding love!
Thou Maker of new morals to mankind,
The grand morality is love of THEE *.

You mentioned the *loadſtone*, as moſt ſignally and moſt extenſively ſerviceable in the ſeafaring buſineſs. Such is *faith*, ſo efficacious, in practical *Chriſtianity*.—This, perhaps, you think a ſcanty and defective principle. The property of ſhewing the northern part of the world, may ſeem equally mean and inconſiderable. But as the one is the very ſoul of navigation, the other is the very life of holineſs.—It is ſomewhat like the ſtone, which the *Babylonian* monarch ſaw in his dream, *cut from the rock without hands* †: which, tho' deſpicable to human appearance, was mighty in operation; deſtroyed the ſuperb ſtatue; became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. Thus will faith exert and diffuſe its kindly, yet triumphant energy, to every corruption, that it may be ſubdued; to every virtue, that it may be cheriſhed.

Faith is a real perſuaſion, that the bleſſed *JESUS* has ſhed his blood *for me*, and fulfilled all righteouſneſs *in my ſtead*; that, through this great atonement and meritorious obedience, he has purchaſed, even *for my* ſinful ſoul, reconciliation with GOD, ſanctifying grace, and every ſpiritual bleſſing ‡.

When

* Night-Thoughts, N°. IV. † Dan. ii. 34.

‡ This definition of *faith* may poſſibly, at the firſt view, diſſatisfy and alarm even ſome pious people; including, as they apprehend, too great a degree of *aſſurance*. But if they pleaſe to take it in *connection* with the explanation and adjuſtment, delivered in the *ſixteenth Dialogue*, I hope, all cauſe of diſapprobation

When the ALMIGHTY ſunk the cavities of the ocean, and repleniſhed them with the liquid element, he provided an inexhauſtible ſource of moiſture, for the refreſhment of every animal, and the nutriment of every vegetable. In like manner, where-ever he works this true faith, he plants the ſeed of *univerſal* holineſs, and provides for the propagation of *every* virtue. This perſuaſion of the divine good-will overcomes our natural reluctance, and excites a fervent deſire to pleaſe our moſt merciful FATHER. This experience of the abundant grace of *CHRIST*, attracts and aſſimilates the ſoul; turning it into his amiable likeneſs, "as the wax is turned to the imprinted ſeal." —What will be the language of ſuch a perſon?

"Did my exalted MASTER empty himſelf and "become poor, that his moſt unworthy ſervant might "be *filled with all the fulneſs of GOD* *?* And ſhall "not I chearfully deny myſelf the expenſive pleaſures "of the world, that I may have ſomewhat to beſtow "on his needy children?—Has the death of *CHRIST*, "as a puniſhment, ſatisfied the moſt rigorous juſtice "for my ſins; as a price, has it redeemed me from "every evil; and, as a ſacrifice, made my peace with "GOD moſt high? And ſhall I not, by theſe *mer-*"*cies* of my dying LORD, be induced to preſent all "the members of my body, and all the faculties of "my ſoul, as a *living ſacrifice* † to his honour? to be "employed in his ſervice, and reſigned to his will? "—Do I believe, that my SAVIOUR has not only "reſcued me from hell, but eſtabliſhed my title to "all the *bleſſings* included in the promiſes, and all the "*felicity* laid up in heaven? And can I neglect to ſeek "thoſe

probation or ſurpriſe will vaniſh. I flatter myſelf, that the ſentiment will be found, not only comfortable for the ſinner, but agreeable to ſcripture; and truly *unexceptionable*, as well as highly *deſirable*.

* Eph. iii. 19. † Rom. xii. 1.

" thoſe invaluable bleſſings, or forbear to aſpire after " this immenſe felicity? Can I be ſo *ungrateful* as to " affront, ſo *inſenſible* as to forget, the infinitely-be- " neficent AUTHOR of both? Am I perſuaded, that " the PRINCE of peace is entered into glory as my " *forerunner* *, and has prepared manſions of bliſs " for my final reception? And ſhall I not follow him " thither in my hopes and my affections? be as a pil- " grim below, and have my converſation above?— " Is not this a moſt ſweet and effectual method of " gaining my heart, and if my heart, then all my " powers to his bleſſed ſelf?

Such, my dear *Theron*, will be the *effects* of faith. Therefore it is not in vain, much leſs to the diſcou- ragement of real virtue, that the ſcripture lays ſuch a ſtreſs upon faith; ſo frequently urges the importance and neceſſity of faith; repreſents faith; as the prin- cipal work of the divine SPIRIT, and the great in- ſtrument of receiving ſalvation: Becauſe it is a ſure, a ſovereign means of *purifying the heart* †, and never fails to *work by love* ‡.—Was faith, as ſome people are apt to imagine, like a candle put under a buſhel, or like the lamps which burn in ſepulchres; it would then be an inſignificant labour to inculcate it, and no better than an empty flouriſh of words to celebrate it. But nothing is more certain, than that faith is a *vital*, an *operative*, a *victorious* principle.

CHRIST is a ſtore-houſe of all good. Whatever is neceſſary to remove our guilt, whatever is expedi- ent, for renewing our nature, whatever is proper to fit us for the eternal fruition of GOD, all this is laid up in *CHRIST*. And all this is received by faith, for application, uſe, and enjoyment.—Accordingly, when *Zaccheus* BELIEVED, he commenced a new man; his bowels yearned with compaſſion; the rapa- cious publican became a friend to the needy, and a fa- ther to the poor ‖. When the *Macedonians* BELIEVED how

* Heb. vi. 20. † Acts xv. 9. ‡ Gal. v. 6. ‖ Luke xix. 8.

how eminently was their ſpirit ennobled, and their practice improved! Though preſſed with afflictions, their ſouls overflowed with joy; and even in the deepeſt poverty, they ſignalized themſelves by the abundance of their liberality *.—When the *firſt converts* BELIEVED, the change of their behaviour was ſo remarkable, the holineſs of their lives ſo exemplary, that they won the favour, and commanded the reſpect, of all the people †.—In ſhort, it is as impoſſible for the ſun to be in his meridian ſphere, and not to diſſipate darkneſs, or diffuſe light; as for faith to exiſt in the ſoul, and not exalt the temper, and meliorate the conduct.—That my dear *Theron* may be *eſtabliſhed* in faith, may *increaſe* in faith, may *abound* in faith, is the moſt affectionate wiſh that thought can ſuggeſt, or friendſhip adopt. May his faith therefore be eſtabliſhed like the mountain-oaks, increaſe like the progreſſive ſtream, till it ſpreads and abounds like the overflowing flood ‡!

I intended to have cloſed my letter, and confirmed my point, by a *very memorable* ſtory. But however your patience may perſevere, my time fails, and my hand is weary. The next poſt, if nothing unexpected intervenes, ſhall bring you the ſequel. May it, when brought to my friend, be as *a nail faſtened in a ſure place*, and give the rivet of conviction to all theſe important

* 2 *Cor.* viii. 2. Here is, eſpecially in the original, as fine an *antitheſis*, perhaps, as ever was penned. Since my laſt notes were ſo copious, I ſhall forego the pleaſure of particularizing the beauties of this clauſe. I leave it to the lover of ſacred literature, to admire the apoſtle's expreſſion, to be charmed with the ſpirit of the *Macedonian* believers, and to derive edification from both.

† Acts ii. 47.

‡ Theſe images we may venture to ſtyle *beautiful*, becauſe they are borrowed from the apoſtle; βεβαιωμενοι εν τη πιστει. Col. ii. 7. προκοπη της πιστεως. Phil. i. 25. υπεραυξανει γιαρις. 2 Theſſ. i. 3.

important truths!—In the mean time, or rather at all times, I remain

Cordially and invariably yours,

ASPASIO.

LETTER XI.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

FAITH in the imputed righteousness of *JESUS CHRIST* is a fundamental principle, in that invaluable system of sacred and divine philosophy,—THE GOSPEL: by which the heavenly TEACHER is continually training up millions of rational and immortal creatures, for the true perfection of their nature; for the final fruition of their GOD; or, in other words, for a state of consummate happiness and everlasting exaltation.—In this school, may you and I be humble *students*, and daily *proficients!* While others are ambitious of glittering distinctions, and sounding titles, may it be our highest aim, our greatest glory, to answer the character of BELIEVERS! By this character, the supreme LORD distinguishes his chosen people, and denominates the heirs of salvation.—This character stands fairest in the book of life, and brightest in the annals of eternity.—This character, however neglected or disesteemed among men, will be remembered and had in honour, when the pompous names of *statesmen* and *generalissimo* are known no more.

As faith is of such singular and extensive efficacy in genuine Christianity, methinks, I would have all our meditations *terminate* on its glorious object, and be calculated to *invigorate* so beneficial a principle.—When we reflect on that stupendous act, the creation of the

world out of nothing; let us remember, it was *HIS* act, who *obtained eternal redemption for us*. When we contemplate that immenſe theatre of wonders, the heavens and their ſhining hoſts; let us not forget, that they are all *HIS* works, who *brought in everlaſting righteouſneſs* for us.—Do we turn our thoughts to the ocean, that ſpacious and magnificent canal, which covers more than half the globe? It was formed by *HIS* word, and is obedient to *HIS* will, who *loved us, and waſhed us from our ſins in his own blood*. Do we take a view of the earth, that grand and inexhauſtible magazine, which furniſhes ſuch a multiplicity of conveniencies for ſo many millions of creatures? It is all *HIS* property, and wholly at *HIS* diſpoſal, who *emptied* * *himſelf* for our ſake, and *had not where to lay his head*.—For thus ſaith the inſpired philoſopher, thus ſaith the oracle of revelation, *All things were made* BY *him, and* FOR *him* †.

The great CREATOR has *enriched* this habitable globe with a profuſion of good. He has *adorned* it with a variety, an order, and a beauty, which are perfectly charming. He has *ennobled* it with a dignity, a ſublimity, and a grandeur, which are at once delightful and aſtoniſhing. In all this, reaſon cannot but diſcern a clear manifeſtation of power, a bright diſplay of wiſdom, and a rich demonſtration of benignity.—But will the CREATOR himſelf vouchſafe to be made fleſh, on purpoſe that he may *obey* and *die* for his guilty creatures? This is what neither the utmoſt penetration of men, nor the very ſuperior intelligence of angels, could ever have demonſtrated, diſcovered, or conceived. This exceeds whatever the elements have produced, whatever the ſun has beheld, as much as the extent and magnificence of the planetary ſyſtem exceed the dimenſions and the furniture of a ſhepherd's hut.—To reveal this, is the bleſſed peculiarity of the goſpel. To know and believe this, is the

* Εκενωσεν εαυτον. Phil. ii. 7. † Col. i. 16.

the distinguishing prerogative of a Christian. To *apply* this, to *dwell* upon this, to *connect* this with all our observations of the universe, should be our favourite and habitual employ. This will improve wonder into devotion, and raise the entertainments of science into the joy of salvation. This will render every philosophical speculation a strengthener of our faith; and make the various scenes of nature, a guide to grace, and a step to glory.—When this is done, then all things attain their proper end; and as they are *by CHRIST*, so they are *for CHRIST*.

But I forget myself, my business, and my promise. I am to establish the point by incontestable fact, not to embellish it by loose harangue. With pleasure I address myself to discharge the obligation; and exemplify, in a very memorable instance, the *power* of faith on *religious* practice.—From whence shall I fetch my exemplification? From the memoirs of the indefatigable apostle of the Gentiles? Here I find one, most concisely, and at the same time most forcibly displayed.

After these things were ended, says the sacred historian, *Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed thro' Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome* ‡.—Who can observe, and not admire, this plain unambitious manner of relating a series of labours, the most signally successful, and most extensively useful? Nothing in human conduct ever surpassed the *greatness* of the one, and perhaps nothing in historical composition ever equalled the *simplicity* of the other.

St *Paul* had already reduced *Ephesus* and *Asia* to the obedience of *CHRIST*. He had already brought *Macedonia* and *Achaia* into subjection to the gospel. He had long ago erected the standard, and spread the triumphs of Christianity, in the regions of *Arabia*. Yet, as if he had hitherto atchieved nothing, he bends

‡ Acts xix. 21.

his forces towards *Jeruſalem*. Then he marks out *Rome* for the ſeat of his ſpiritual warfare. After this he forms the ſame beneficent deſign upon *Spain*: including, in his comprehenſive plan, the metropolis and the boundaries * of the known world.—The univerſe is but juſt large enough, to be the ſcene of his action; he never diſcontinues the *charitable campaign*, but with the laſt breath of his life; and he ſpeaks of this unintermitted courſe of arduous and dangerous ſervices, as if he was only going to make ſome friendly *viſit*, or join in a party of innocent *pleaſure; After I have been at Jeruſalem, I muſt alſo ſee Rome* †.

Which

* *Spain* was then ſuppoſed to be the boundary of the *weſtern*, as the *Ganges* was reckoned the extremity of the *eaſtern* world.

Omnibus in terris quæ ſunt a Gadibus uſque
Auroram et Gangen. Juv. Sat. X.

† I am quite charmed, I muſt confeſs, with this very *ſimple*, but incomparably-*gallant* manner of the appoſtle's ſpeaking. Far beyond all the pomp of panegyric, it diſplays the hero.

When a handful of *Spartans* undertook to defend the paſs of *Thermopylæ* againſt the whole army of *Perſia*; ſo prodigious, it was reported, were the multitudes of the *Perſians*, that the very flight of their arrows would intercept the ſhining of the ſun. *Then* ſaid *Dieneces*, one of the *Spartan* leaders, *we ſhall have the advantage of fighting in the ſhade.*—Juſt before the battle of *Agincourt*, news was brought to King *Henry*'s camp, that the *French* were exceedingly numerous, and would take the field with more than ſix times the number of the *Engliſh* troops. To which the brave Captain *Gam* immediately replied, *Is it ſo? Then there are enough to be cut in pieces, enough to be taken priſoners, and enough to run away.*—A commanding officer, I think, among the royaliſts, being beſieged by the parliamentary forces, was ſummoned to ſurrender the caſtle. The ſummons he rejected, and treated with contempt. Upon this, the enemy threatened, that, if he perſiſted in his reſolution, the walls ſhould, without farther delay, be battered to the ground. *What if they are?* was his anſwer. *I am not obliged to rebuild them.*

Such calm and undaunted ſentiments, amidſt circumſtances of the moſt imminent danger, argue an uncommon *fortitude* and

Which of your *Alexanders*, which of your *Cæsars*, which of all the heroes renowned in *Grecian* or *Roman* ſtory, can vie with the zeal and magnanimity of this poor, deſpiſed tent-maker? ſo *poor*, that he was conſtrained to work with his own hands for a morſel of bread; ſo *deſpiſed*, that he was frequently treated as the offſcouring of all things. Notwithſtanding all theſe diſcouragements, what did he not attempt, what did he not accompliſh, for the honour of his MASTER, and the good of his fellow-creatures?—He embarks in a ſhallop; he has neither ſhield nor ſpear; yet he purpoſes to command the ocean, and conquer the globe. What *greatneſs* of ſoul was here! he expects ‡ nothing but poverty, contempt, and death; yet his heart is big with the hope of enriching, ennobling, and ſaving ages and generations. What *benevolence* of temper was this!—Should you inquire concerning this illuſtrious champion of the croſs, *Who* were his potent auxiliaries? None but the divine SPIRIT. —*What* were his mighty weapons? Nothing but the word of truth and grace.—*Whence* proceeded his intrepid, his enterprizing, his all-conquering reſolution? Only from faith, a lively faith in *JESUS CHRIST*.

This, I think, is a ſufficient confirmation of my doctrine.—Nevertheleſs, I have another inſtance to produce; one that was exhibited in an age, when the glorious object of our faith ſhone with dim luſtre and

and *ſuperiority* of mind. But, if we conſider the nature of the apoſtle's enterprize; that it was nothing leſs than an open attack on the empire of Satan; a declared war againſt the whole idolatrous world; all which was to be attended with perſecution and impriſonment, was to end in martyrdom and death;—if we conſider this, I believe, nothing will appear, at once ſo humble and ſo exalted, ſo modeſt yet ſo magnanimous, as the turn and air of *his* expreſſion; *After I have been at Jeruſalem, I muſt alſo ſee Rome.*

‡ Acts xx. 23.

and with distant beams; yet it may justly be admired, and will hardly be eclipsed, by the most enlightened among the *Christian* saints.—To keep you no longer in suspense, the case, I mean, is that which *Moses* records, and the apostle celebrates. BY FAITH *Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son* *.—

As this is so singular an example of the efficacious and triumphant operation of faith; unequalled in any nation of the world, or under any dispensation of religion; you will give me leave to dwell a little on some of its marvellous circumstances.

Abraham was an eminent and distinguished servant of the most high GOD; favoured with peculiar manifestations of the divine will, and dignified with the honourable title of his MAKER's friend †. Yet even this man is harassed with a long succession of troubles; and, which was reckoned in those ages the most deplorable calamity, *goes childless* ‡.

Long he waits, worshipping GOD with the most patient resignation. At length, an oracle from the LORD gives him hope, gives him assurance of a son. Joyfully he receives the promise, and rests in humble expectation of its accomplishment.—Several years run their rounds, but no pleasing infant prattles in his arms, or is dandled upon his knees. At last the

* Heb. xi. 17. † 2 Chron. xx. 7. Is. xli. 8.

‡ There was so much gall in this calamity, that it embittered every other species of happiness. Visited by this affliction, the patriarch could taste no joy in his late signal victory; all his worldly prosperity was insipid; and he seems to have been incapable of relishing any other comfort; *What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* Gen. xv. 2.—I would intreat the reader to take particular notice of *this* circumstance. It will have the same effect upon the representation of *Abraham*'s obedience, and the whole series of his difficulties, as a *magnifying* glass has upon the objects to which it is applied.

the handmaid becomes pregnant. But what a *diſappointment* was here! This is the ſon of the bond-woman, not of the free.

How afflicting the caſe of this excellent perſon! His kinsfolk and acquaintance ſee their olive-branches flouriſhing round about their tables. Even his ungodly neighbours have children at their deſire, and leave the reſidue of their ſubſtance for their babes. But *Abraham*, the worſhipper of the ALMIGHTY, the favourite of heaven;—this *Abraham* is deſtitute of an heir, to ſupport his name, to propagate his family, and inherit the bleſſing.—O the ſtraits! to which the believer is ſometimes reduced! How does a ſovereign Providence try his faith, as it were in a furnace of fire! not that it may be conſumed, but refined, and come forth with augmented luſtre, to the praiſe of *ever-faithful*, *all-ſufficient* grace.

GOD is pleaſed to renew the grant, and aſſure him more explicitly, that *Sarah* ſhall have a ſon. But this notice comes at a very late period in life; when *Sarah* is advanced in years, and too old, according to the courſe of nature, to conceive. However, the pious patriarch *ſtaggers not through unbelief;* but *hopes even againſt hope* *.—Is it improbable? is it difficult? nay, is it to all human appearance impoſſible? So much the fitter for the exertion, and ſo much the more proper for the diſplay of almighty power.

At laſt the gift ſo earneſtly deſired, is vouchſafed. *Sarah* has a *child*,—a *ſon*,—an *Iſaac;* one who ſhould be a ſource of conſolation and delight to his parents; ſhould *fill their mouth with laughter* †, *and their tongue with joy*.—With tender care, doubtleſs, this pleaſant plant is reared. Many prayers are put up for his long life, and great happineſs. The fond parents watch over him, as over the apple of their own eye.

Their

* Rom. iv. 18, 20.

† *Pſal.* cxxvi. 2. This is the import of the *Hebrew* name *Iſaac*.

Their life is bound up in the life of the lad *.—He grows in grace, as he grows in ſtature. So amiable is his temper, and ſo engaging his behaviour, as could not fail of endearing him even to a ſtranger; how much more to ſuch indulgent parents, after ſo long a ſtate of barrenneſs, and ſo many expectations ſo frequently fruſtrated.

Now, methinks, we are ready to congratulate the happy ſire; and flatter ourſelves, that his tribulations have an end: that the ſtorms which ruffled the noon of life, are blown over; and the evening of his age is becoming calm and ſerene.—But let *not him that girdeth on his harneſs, boaſt himſelf, as he that putteth it off* †. Our warfare on earth is never accompliſhed, till we bow our head, and give up the ghoſt. The ſharpeſt, the ſevereſt trial is ſtill behind. GOD, the ſupreme and uncontrollable GOD, demands the child. 'Tis the will of heaven, that he make his exit, juſt as he arrives at manhood. "Where now, *Abraham*, are "all thy pleaſing proſpects? How often didſt thou "ſay, in thy fond delighted heart, *This ſame ſhall "comfort us concerning our trouble* ‡? Many have been "my ſorrows; but this child ſhall dry up my tears, "and bring me to my grave in peace.—Alas! this "lovely flower is to be cut down, in its faireſt, full-"eſt bloom. All thy ſhining hopes are overcaſt in a "moment."

Abraham ||, ſays GOD,—*Abraham* knows the voice. It

* Gen. xliv. 30. † 1 Kings xx. 11. ‡ Gen. v. 29.

|| The ſentence, with which the inſpired hiſtorian introduces this affecting narrative, is unhappily tranſlated in our Bibles, נסה את אברהם *GOD* did *tempt Abraham.*——This expreſſion ſeems, more than ſeems to claſh with the doctrine of St *James*, chap. i. ver. 13.; and cannot but ſound harſh to thoſe ears, which have been accuſtomed to underſtand by *tempter* and *tempting*, perſons utterly odious, and practices extremely pernicious.—Whereas, the true and natural ſignification of the original is, he *tried* or *explored*. GOD ſounded the depth, and

It is the voice of condescending goodness. He had often heard it with a rapture of delight.—Instantly he replies, "*Here I am.* Speak, LORD; for thy ser-"vant is all attention:" hoping, no doubt, to receive some fresh manifestation of the divine *good-will* to himself and his family; or some new discovery of the method, in which the divine *wisdom* would accomplish the promises, *I will multiply thy seed; I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*

Take thy son; adds GOD. And might not *Abraham* reasonably expect, that, since his son was advanced to years of maturity, he should be directed how to settle him in the world with honour and advantage, where to find a virtuous and fruitful partner of his bed?—He is commanded, not barely to take his *son*, but his *only* son; his son *Isaac;* whom he *loved.* How must these affecting images awaken all that soft complacency, and all that tender triumph, which are known only to the fondly-feeling heart of a parent! Must not such an introduction, so remarkably endearing, heighten his expectation of some signal mercy, to be conferred on the beloved youth; and would it not render the blessing peculiarly acceptable, more than doubly welcome?

Was he not then startled? was he not horribly amazed, when, instead of some renewed expression of the divine favour, he received the following orders? *Take now thy son,—thy only son,—Isaac,—whom thou lovest;—and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of* †.—

Was ever message so alarming? each word more piercing to parental ears, than the keenest dagger to the

and measured the height of his servant's faith, in order to erect an everlasting monument of the victorious efficacy of this sacred principle, and exhibit an illustrious pattern to all them who should hereafter believe.

† Gen. xxii. 2.

the heart. Every clause brings an additional load of misery; till the *whole* command swells into the most accumulated and aggravated wo.

Abraham, *take thy son*.—Who but *Abraham* could have forbore remonstrating and pleading, on such an occasion?—*Ananias*, being charged with a commission to *Saul* the persecutor, takes upon him to argue the case with his almighty SOVEREIGN: *LORD, I have heard by many concerning this man, how much evil he hath done to the saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call upon thy name* *. Sure, it can never be safe or expedient to present myself voluntarily before him, who came hither breathing out threatnings and slaughter against me. What is this but to court danger; and run with open eyes into ruin?—Thus *Ananias*: and with how much greater appearance of reason might *Abraham* have replied?

"*LORD*, shall I lose my child? lose him, almost "as soon as I have received him? Didst thou give "him, only to tantalize thy servant? Remember, "gracious GOD, the name he bears. *How* shall he "answer its chearing import? *how* shall he be a source "of satisfaction to his parents, or the father of many "nations, if thou takest him away in his unmarried "state, and the very prime of his years?

"If sin lies at the door, let me *expiate* the guilt. "Let thousands of rams, let every bullock in my "stalls, bleed at thy altar. My wealth, blessed LORD, "and all my goods, are *nothing* in comparison of my "*Isaac*. Command me to be stript of my possessions; "command me to roam, as a fugitive and a vagabond "in the earth; and I will magnify thy holy name. "Only let my child, my dear child be spared.

"Or, if nothing will appease thy indignation but "human blood, let *my death* be the sacrifice. Upon "me be the vengeance. I am old and grey-headed.

"The

* Acts ix. 13, 14.

" The beſt of my days are paſt, and the beſt of my " ſervices done. If this tottering wall tumbles, there " will be little or no cauſe for regret. But, if the " pillar of my houſe, and the foundation of my hopes, " —if *he* be ſnatched from me, what good will my " life do me? *O my ſon! my ſon! would GOD I* " *might die for thee* *!

" If it muſt be a blooming youth, in the flower of " his days, be pleaſed, moſt merciful GOD, to ſelect " the victim from ſome *fruitful* family. There are " thoſe who abound in children. Children are mul- " tiplied unto them; and though many were remo- " ved, yet would their table be full. There are thoſe " who have flocks and herds; whereas I have only " this one little lamb †, the very ſolace of my ſoul, " and the ſtay of my declining years; and ſhall this " be taken away, while all *thoſe* are left?"

Yes, *Abraham;* it is thy ſon, and not another's, that is marked for the victim.—What diſtreſs, had he not been ſupported by faith, what exquiſite diſtreſs muſt have overwhelmed this affectionate parent! How could he refrain from crying out, and with a flood of tears?—" If the decree cannot be reverſed, if it muſt " be the fruit of my own body, O! that *Iſhmael*, the " ſon of the handmaid—How ſhall I ſpeak it? my " heart bleeds at the thought; at the thought even of " *his* expiring agonies, and untimely death. But as " for *Iſaac*, the ſon of my beloved ſpouſe, the ſon of " my old age, the crown of all my labours?—how? " how ſhall I ſurvive ſuch a loſs? The blow that goes " to his heart, muſt be fatal to us both.

" Yet, if he *muſt* die, and there is no remedy; " may he not at leaſt expire by a natural diſſolution? " May not ſome common diſtemper unlooſe the cords " of life, and lay him down gently in the tomb? May " not his fond mother and myſelf ſeal his cloſing

* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. † 2 Sam. xii. 3.

" eyes, and ſoften his dying pangs by our tender of-
" fices?"

No, *Abraham*. Thy ſon muſt be *ſlaughtered* on the altar. He ſhall have no other bed of death, than the pile of hewn wood; no other winding-ſheet, than his own clotted gore. The ſacrificing-knife, and not any common diſeaſe, ſhall bring him to his end.—And think not to ſatisfy thy ſorrowing fondneſs, by paying him the laſt honours of a decent interment. It is the LORD's will, that he be cut in pieces, conſumed to aſhes, and made a *burnt-offering:* ſo that nothing ſhall remain, to be preſerved or embalmed. It ſhall not be in thy power to ſoothe thy grief, by reſorting to his grave, and weeping at his ſepulchre, and ſaying,—*Here lies Iſaac*.

" But if all muſt be executed, GOD grant theſe
" eyes may never behold the diſmal tragedy! If my
" *Iſaac* muſt be bound hand and foot for the ſlaugh-
" ter, if he muſt receive the ſteel into his boſom, and
" welter in his own innocent blood, heaven forbid,
" that I ſhould *behold* ſo killing a ſpectacle!"

Even this mitigation cannot be granted. Thou muſt not only be an eyewitneſs of his agony, but be the *executioner* of thy *Iſaac*. *Thy* hands muſt lift the deadly weapon; *thy* hands muſt point it to the beloved breaſt; *thy own* hands muſt urge its way, thro' the guſhing veins, and ſhivering fleſh, till it be plunged in the throbbing heart. GOD will not permit the work to be done by another. The father, the father muſt be the butcher.

Is not the wretched father *ſtunned* and *thunderſtruck?* does he not ſtand fixed in horror, and ſpeechleſs with grief? What words can be mournful enough to expreſs his ſorrows?—Unheard-of, ſhocking affair! Nature *recoils* at the very thought! How then can the beſt of fathers perform the deed?—How ſhall he anſwer it to the wife of his boſom, the mother of the lovely youth?—How can he juſtify it to the world?

They

They will never be perſuaded, that the GOD of goodneſs can delight in cruelty, or authoriſe ſo horrid an action.—Will they not take up a *taunting* proverb, and ſay at every turn? "There goes the man, the monſter rather, that has imbrued his hands in his own ſon's blood! This is he that pretends to piety, and yet could be ſo ſavage, as to aſſaſſinate, coolly and deliberately aſſaſſinate an only child!"—Might not thouſands of ſuch reflections croud into his thoughts, and rack his very ſoul?

But GOD is unchangeable. Poſitive is his word, and muſt be obeyed; obeyed immediately too. Take *now* thy ſon. The LORD's command requireth ſpeed. No time is to be loſt, in bidding adieu to his relations, or in fruitleſs ſupplications for revoking the doom.—Nay, *chearfully* as well as inſtantly muſt this command be fulfilled. The great JEHOVAH expects alacrity in his ſervice.—Prodigious trial indeed! Yet not too great for a faith, which the divine SPIRIT infuſes, and the divine SPIRIT ſuſtains.

The patriarch knew full well, that obedience is no obedience, unleſs it be willing and chearful. Therefore he conſults not with fleſh and blood. He is deaf to the arguings of carnal reaſon, and regards not the yearnings of paternal affection. Without a *murmuring* word, without a *moment*'s delay *, he ſets forward on his journey; not ſo much as betraying the leaſt uneaſineſs, to alarm his wife; nor heaving the leaſt ſigh, to ſurpriſe his attendants.—And canſt thou, *Abraham*, canſt thou perſiſt in thy purpoſe? can thy heart firmly reſolve, can thy hand ſteadily execute, this inexpreſſibly-ſevere taſk? Moſt triumphant faith indeed! Deſervedly art thou ſtyled, *the father of the faithful* †. Thy faith is ſtronger than all the ties of affection; ſtronger than all the pleas of nature, or all the terrors of

* For it is written, *He aroſe early in the morning*, ver. 3.
† Rom. iv. 18.

of death,—even of a death far more dreadful than thy own.

And now muſt he travel, during three tedious, and, one would think, moſt melancholy days; with his *Iſaac* conſtantly before his eyes; with the bloody ſcene continually in his apprehenſions; and nothing to divert his mind from dwelling on every bitter circumſtance, and all the grievous conſequences.—*On the third day*, Abraham *lifted up his eyes, and beheld afar off the* appointed *place*. His ſervants are ordered to keep their diſtance; while himſelf, with the fire and the knife in his hands; and his ſon, with the burden of wood on his ſhoulders, *went both of them together*.—Who does not pity the ſweet youth, toiling under that load, which muſt ſoon reek with his blood, and ſoon reduce him to aſhes?—Mean-while the intended victim, wondering to ſee all theſe preparations made, and no proper animal near, aſks this pertinent queſtion; *My father, behold the fire and the wood! but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?*—Sure, this endearing ſpeech, which diſcovered ſuch a knowledge of religion, and ſuch a concern for its duties, muſt rouſe the father's anguiſh, and ſhake his determination. How can he be the death of ſo much innocence, and ſo much piety?

Faith overcomes all difficulties. Unmoved and inflexible, the patriarch replies, *GOD will provide himſelf a lamb for a burnt-offering, my ſon* *. After this he

* *Abraham* in this anſwer, like many of the other prophets in their predictions, ſeems not to have *thoroughly underſtood* the import of his own words. What he himſelf meant, I apprehend, is repreſented in the paraphraſe of his ſpeech. Yet GOD ſo over-ruled his tongue, that it more fully expreſſed the divine decree, than the parental idea.

GOD will provide himſelf a lamb for a burnt-offering, my ſon. Thus the words are placed in the *Hebrew*. *My ſon* comes laſt, and cloſes the reply; that the tender accents may be left to vibrate on the father's ear, and the dear diſtreſſing image

continue

he discloses the strange, the startling secret: "Thou "thyself, my dear child, art destined to this purpose. "The GOD who bestowed thee on my longing de- "sires, is pleased to require thee again at my hand. "The LORD gave, and the LORD taketh away, "let us both adore the name of the LORD. Let "us confide in his promised goodness, and unani- "mously profess, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in "him.*"—It does not appear, that the amiable youth *resisted* or *gainsaid*. He had strength enough to oppose, and speed enough to escape *, the attempts of an aged father. Either or both of which, the law of self-preservation might seem to dictate, and the light of reason to justify. But *Isaac* knew, that his father was a prophet. In this prophetical character, he sees and acknowledges the warrant of heaven. And since his CREATOR calls, he is content to go.—Excellent *Isaac!* who does not admire thy courage? who is not charmed with thy resignation? and must we, in a few minutes, must we see thee a pale, a bloody, a breathless corpse?

Methinks, I shudder as we draw near the direful catastrophe. The altar is built; the wood laid in order; all things are ready for the solemn service; and *Isaac* offers his willing throat to the knife.—Nevertheless, that the work of destiny may be sure, and no one particular relating to a sacrifice omitted, *Abraham binds his son*. I have known a stubborn malefactor, quite unalarmed, when sentenced to the ignominious tree;

continue playing before his mind.—This, I think, is a delicacy not to be overlooked; and increases the pathos of the narrative.

* According to *Josephus*, *Isaac was*, when he submitted himself to the slaughter, about twenty-five years old. Others think, his age was thirty-three; which makes him more exactly resemble his suffering LORD. Then his father must be above a hundred and thirty years old. Either account will justify *Aspasio*'s supposition.

tree; not at all impreſſed with the moſt awful repreſentations of eternal judgment: yet, when a perſon came to meaſure him for his *coffin*, the hardened wretch was hard no longer. He ſtarted, turned pale, and trembled in every joint.—Even ſuch a circumſtance makes no impreſſion on *Abraham;* neither alters his purpoſe, nor changes his countenance. He meaſures his *Iſaac;* meaſures thoſe limbs, which he had ſo frequently and ſo tenderly careſſed; and if not for the coffin, yet for immediate ſlaughter.

Having bound him,—ſurpriſing reſolution!—bound him for the ſword and for the flame, he *lays him upon the altar on the wood.* There, now, lies *Iſaac;* the dear, the dutiful, the religious *Iſaac! Abraham's* joy; *Sarah's* delight; the heir of the promiſes! there he lies, all meek and reſigned; expecting, every moment, the ſtroke of death to fall.—O parents! parents! do not your bowels yearn? is not humanity itſelf diſtreſſed at the ſcene? Say, thou who art a father, what thinkeſt thou of *Abraham's* obedience? couldſt thou, to *ſuch* a ſon, have acted *ſuch* a part?

See! the father, reſolute to the very laſt, unſheaths the murdering blade; makes bare the innocent boſom; and marks the place, where life may find the ſpeedieſt exit. *His heart is fixed!* he ſtretches his arm; and now, even now is aiming the mortal blow;—when,—rejoice O ye worſhippers of a gracious GOD! break forth into ſinging, ye that are in pain for the tried parent! the LORD almighty interpoſes, in this article of extreme need *. The ANGEL of the covenant

* Upon this moſt ſeaſonable interpoſition, the inſpired hiſtorian makes a very judicious and edifying remark; which ſeems to be greatly obſcured, if not entirely ſpoiled, by our tranſlation; *In the mount of the LORD it ſhall be ſeen.* I muſt confeſs, I have always been puzzled to find, not only a pertinent ſenſe, but any ſenſe at all, in theſe words. Whereas the original is as clear in its ſignification, as it is appoſite to the purpoſe.— יראה בהר יהוה *In the mount the LORD will be ſeen;* or

venant speaks from heaven, and with-holds the lifted hand, in the very act to strike. GOD, who only intended to *manifest* his faith, and make it *honourable*, bids him desist. GOD applauds his obedience; substitutes another sacrifice in *Isaac*'s stead; renews his covenant with the father; and not only reprieves the life of the son, but promises him a numerous and illustrious issue; promises to make him the progenitor of the MESSIAH, and thereby a public blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Tell me now, *Theron*, was there ever such an astonishing effort of obedience? such a perfect prodigy of resignation? YET THIS HATH FAITH DONE *.

—If

or, *In the mount the LORD will provide.* q. d. "This memorable event gave rise to, at least is an eminent exemplification of, that *proverbial* expression, which is commonly "used at this day: In the mount of difficulty, or in the very "crisis of need, when matters seem to be irretrievable and "desperate, *then* the LORD appears as a present help. "Man's extremity is GOD's opportunity." See *Gen.* xxii. 14.

* Heb. xi. 17. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac.*—The faith, of which such glorious things are spoken, to which such admirable achievements are ascribed, throughout this whole chapter, was a faith in "the seed of "the woman," the promised MESSIAH.—Or, could it be demonstrated, (which, I will venture to conclude, is impossible,) that, in all these heroic instances of obedience, there was no believing regard to *CHRIST*; no apprehension of his unspeakable love; no application of his transcendent merits; our argument would not lose its force, but strike with *redoubled* energy. For, if a belief in very *inferior* manifestations of the divine goodness, faithfulness, and power, wrought so efficaciously on those ancient worthies; how much more victoriously must the same principle act, under far *brighter* displays of all the supreme perfections, in the person of *JESUS CHRIST!*—I would only add, that so long as this chapter remains in the Bible, it will furnish an unanswerable confutation of those objections, which suppose the doctrine of faith to have an unkindly influence on religious or virtuous practice. Against all such cavils, *it will stand fast for evermore as the moon, and as the faithful witness in heaven.*

—If you ſhould aſk, How was it poſſible for *Abraham* to perform all this, in the manner deſcribed? The anſwer is obvious: Becauſe *Abraham* BELIEVED; or, in other words, was fully perſuaded, that the GOD, who had given him this ſon from the *barren* womb, was able to raiſe him again from the *ſmoking* * aſhes. —As the ſame GOD, who required this ſacrifice, had expreſsly declared, *In Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called;* the patriarch doubted not, but the promiſe would, in a way known to infinite wiſdom, be punctually accompliſhed. Hence he made no diſpute, and felt no reluctance. His faith baniſhed every uneaſy apprehenſion, and neither fear nor ſorrow had place in his breaſt. By faith he was enabled, *ſpeedily* and *chearfully*, without ſo much as a parting tear †, to obey this unparalleled precept.

And

* He ſeems to have expected not only the certain, but the *immediate* reſtoration of his ſlain ſon; that he ſhould be revived on the very ſpot, before he left the place, ſo as to accompany his return. For he ſays to his ſervants, Not *I*, but *we* will go, and worſhip, and *return*. שוב ver. 5.

† This account is ſo *very extraordinary*, that I ſhall not be ſurpriſed, if the reader finds ſome difficulty in giving his aſſent to it: eſpecially, as he may have accuſtomed himſelf to form very different conceptions of this remarkable affair; and may poſſibly be confirmed in a different train of ideas, by ſeeing a repreſentation of the ſtory in a celebrated *print:* where the father appears, claſping his ſon in a tender embrace; bedewing him with his tears; and ſuffering as much through grief, as the devoted youth is going to ſuffer by the knife.—But the *engraver*, I apprehend, had not ſo attentively examined the circumſtances of the ſacred narrative, nor ſo carefully compared them with other paſſages of ſcripture, as a judicious and worthy *friend* of mine; from whom I learned to conſider this wonderful tranſaction in the above repreſented view. And I muſt confeſs, the more I revolve it in my mind, the more I am convinced of its propriety.

I flatter myſelf, the reader will be of the ſame opinion, if he pleaſes to conſult the tenth chapter of *Leviticus;* where *Nadab* and *Abihu*, the ſons of *Aaron*, are devoured by fire from

And if all this, which would otherwiſe have been utterly impracticable, was wrought by faith; you need not ſuſpect, of *weakneſs* and *inſufficiency*, ſo approved a principle. Far from enervating, it will invigorate every good diſpoſition; and inſtead of damping, will give life to every religious duty.—Cheriſh faith, and you will of courſe cultivate obedience. Water this root, and the branches of univerſal godlineſs will aſſuredly partake the beneficial effects; will ſpread their honours, and bring forth their fruits.—Through the *power* of faith, the ſaints have wrought righteouſneſs, in all its magnanimous and heroic acts.—The *doctrine* of faith is called by St Paul, *a doctrine according to godlineſs* *; exquiſitely contrived to anſwer all the ends, and ſecure every intereſt of real piety.—The *grace* of faith St *Jude* ſtyles, *our moſt holy faith* †; intimating, that it is not only productive of holineſs, but that the moſt *refined* and *exalted* holineſs ariſes from this ſtock.

Let us then be diligent to exerciſe, and careful to increaſe, faith in *JESUS CHRIST*. Let us maintain the ſame zealous ſolicitude for this leading capital grace, as the renowned *Epaminondas* expreſſed for his ſhield. When that gallant general was, in an engagement

from before the LORD. Yet *Aaron* is not allowed to mourn, even at ſuch a terrible and afflictive viſitation. And when, through the frailty of human nature, he could not wholly refrain, he durſt not preſume to eat of the ſin-offering. *Such things*, ſays he, *have befallen me, if I had eaten of the ſin-offering, ſhould it have been accepted in the ſight of the LORD?*—Let me add, that we find not the leaſt indication of ſuch *agonizing* ſorrow, nor indeed of *any* ſorrow at all, in the hiſtory as related by *Moſes*. Neither could *Abraham* have been a proper type of the eternal FATHER, making his only begotten SON a ſacrifice for ſin, if he had not willingly offered up *Iſaac*. Indeed to offer willingly, ſeems to have been abſolutely *neceſſary*, in every acceptable oblation, and every religious ſervice. See 2 *Cor.* ix. 7. 1 *Chron.* xxviii. 9.

* 1 Tim. vi. 3. † Jude, *ver.* 20.

ment with the enemy, ſtruck to the ground; his ſoldiers carried him off, breathleſs and fainting, to his tent. The very moment he opened his eyes, and recovered the uſe of ſpeech, he aſked—not whether his wound was mortal? not whether his troops were routed? but whether his *ſhield* was ſafe?—May we be enabled, my dear friend, to keep our ſhield ſafe! May we be *ſtrong*, be *ſteady*, be *lively* in faith! Then, I doubt not, we ſhall give glory to GOD, receive comfort to ourſelves, and abound in the works of the LORD.

Nothing can be more *pertinent* to my purpoſe, than the apoſtle's prayer; That we *may know what is the hope of our calling in CHRIST JESUS, and what is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to themward who believe.* And nothing can be more *expreſſive* of the very ſoul of

Your affectionate,

ASPASIO.

LETTER XII.

ASPASIO *to* THERON.

Dear THERON,

IT is very probable, while I am reading yours, you are peruſing mine. But how unlike is my friend to the repreſentation he receives! How unlike the ſatisfied, unſuſpecting, chearful *Abraham!* Why this *dejected* air in your temper? why thoſe *penſive* ſtrokes in your letter?—Let me anticipate your reply, and make anſwer to myſelf.—This gloom, I truſt, is a ſign of approaching day. Juſt before the morning dawn, the nocturnal darkneſs is blackeſt. And juſt before the appearance of the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, the penitent's diſtreſs is frequently the deepeſt.

eſt. I promiſe myſelf, the hour is at hand, which will *put off your ſackcloth, and gird you with gladneſs.*

Another favourable preſage is, that you take the direct and certain way to obtain ſubſtantial comfort. The righteouſneſs of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*, after which you inquire, about which you are ſolicitous, is a never-failing ſpring of conſolation: becauſe it acquits from all ſin; ſecures from all condemnation; and renders the believer unblameable and unreproveable in the ſight of GOD. Therefore ſays the HOLY GHOST, *His name is as ointment poured forth* *: even that divinely-precious name,—by which he has been celebrated in the preceding epiſtles; by which he is diſtinguiſhed in the ſcriptures of truth; by which, I hope, he will be more and more revealed in my *Theron*'s mind,—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The diſcovery of him under this moſt amiable and glorious capacity, will indeed be like breaking open a vial of the richeſt unguents; which not only fill the room, and regale the ſenſe, with their delightful fragrance; but refreſh the ſpirits, and *rejoice the very heart.*—Might my writing, or my diſcourſe, be as the *alabaſter-box* to contain, to convey, and preſent theſe reviving odours; how highly ſhould I think myſelf honoured, and how ſignally my endeavours bleſſed!

You aſk, "How this righteouſneſs of the divine "REDEEMER becomes ours?"—It is a queſtion which I receive with the utmoſt pleaſure; and, with equal pleaſure, ſhall attempt an anſwer. Or rather, as the SPIRIT of our GOD prompted the firſt, may the ſame unerring GUIDE ſuggeſt the laſt!—This he has abundantly done by his prophets and apoſtles; ſo that I need only have recourſe to their writings, and collect ſome of the hints, which lie treaſured up in thoſe ſtorehouſes of wiſdom.

There

* Cant. i. 3.

There we are often told of union with *CHRIST*, believers are ſaid to be *in CHRIST* *, and to be *one with CHRIST* †.—What is ſtill higher, and implies a greater degree of nearneſs, they are *members of his body, of his fleſh, and of his bones* ‡.—And, which denotes the moſt intimate connection imaginable, *They that are joined to the LORD JESUS, are one ſpirit* ‖ with him!—As theſe expreſſions appear dark, and their ſenſe lies deep, it has pleaſed our all-condeſcending INSTRUCTOR to illuſtrate them, by a variety of ſignificant types, and lively ſimilitudes. This remark very opportunely reminds me of an engagement, which, ſome time ago, I undertook to execute but have hitherto omitted;—to make it evident, that the bleſſed doctrine, for which we have been pleading, *is deducible from ſeveral ſcripture-images* §. A ſhort diſcant upon ſome of the principal, will, I hope, at once diſcharge my former obligation, and ſatisfy your preſent inquiry.

This was ſhadowed forth by the coſtly, odoriferous, flowing unguent, poured upon *Aaron*'s head; *which ran down upon his beard, and deſcended to the ſkirts* ++ *of his cloathing*. So, the merits of our great HIGH PRIEST are derived down to all the faithful; even thoſe of the meaneſt ſtation in life, and the loweſt attainments in religion.

Was

* Col. i. 2. † Heb. ii. 11. ‡ Eph. v. 30.
‖ 1 Cor. vi. 17. § *See* above, p. 47.
++ Pſal. cxxxiii. 2. What we render *ſkirts*, is, in the original, פי מדותיו *the mouth*, or, as the word is tranſlated (*Job* xxx. 18.) *the collar* of his garments. It is hardly ſuppoſable, that the conſecrated oil flowed down to the very bottom of the ſacerdotal veſtments. But it might probably reach the upper hem, or the opening round the neck; what the *Greeks* call περιστοχιον.—This ſenſe will ſufficiently preſerve the gradation; the *head*; the *beard*; the *cloaths*: which ſeem to denote *CHRIST*, his more advanced ſaints, and believers of a lower claſs.

Was it not typified by that instructive vision which the prophet *Zechariah* saw? *I have looked, and behold! a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top thereof: and two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof; which, through two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves* *. The *bowl* and the *lamps* were a proper emblem of believers: who are, by nature, dry vessels, and destitute of all good; yet should shine as lights, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.—The *olive-trees*, arrayed in verdure, and abounding with sap; always emptying themselves, yet ever full; are a very just representation of *CHRIST*, of his unchangeable love, and his inexhaustible grace.—The *golden pipes*, through which the olive-branches transmit their oil, seem to be figurative of faith, in its various and repeated actings. By these channels of conveyance, the unspeakable benefits of a REDEEMER are communicated to our souls, and replenish those empty basons.

Another type the apostle mentions: *The first Adam* he says, *was a figure of him that was to come* †: So eminent a figure, and corresponding in so many instances, that he styles our *LORD JESUS the last Adam* ‡. And why? Because, like the first, he was a *covenant-head* to his people, and transacted in their stead. Insomuch that what he did, and what he suffered, both are placed to their account. Is *Adam*'s sin imputed to all his natural offspring? So is *CHRIST*'s righteousness to all his spiritual seed.—The consequences of both render the doctrine more intelligible, and the truth more undeniable. All men are *judged, condemned, dead* ‖; doomed inevitably to the death of the body, and justly liable to the death of the soul, on the score of *Adam*'s transgression. All believers are *acquitted*,

* Zech. iv. 2, 3, 12.

† Rom. v. 14. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 45. ‖ Rom. v. 15, 16.

ted, justified, saved *; saved from the first death, and made heirs of the resurrection; saved from the second death, and entitled to life eternal, by virtue of *CHRIST*'s obedience.

This union with *CHRIST*, was not only prefigured by types, but is displayed by a variety of similitudes, taken from the most familiar occurrences of life: by which it appears to be our divine MASTER's will, that we should live under the *habitual belief* of this momentous truth, and in the *constant enjoyment* of this distinguished privilege.—You cannot visit a friend, or view your children; you cannot enter your garden, discourse with your spouse, or contemplate your own body, without a representation and a remembrancer of this precious blessing.

CHRIST says to his disciples, *Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends* †. Friends are a second self ‡. St *Paul* speaking of *Onesimus*, uses this remarkable phrase, *Receive him, as myself;* and, which is still more emphatical, *Receive him that is mine own bowels* ‖. Is not *CHRIST*'s friendship of the most tender and exalted kind? Doubtless it must be equal, doubtless it must be superior, infinitely superior to *Jonathan*'s.—*Jonathan* loved *David* as his own soul. But *CHRIST* loved sinners with a love stronger than death. They were dearer to him than his own inestimable life.—*Jonathan* exposed himself to imminent danger, in vindicating *David*'s conduct. *JESUS* surrendered himself to certain death, in making reconciliation for our offences.—*Jonathan* interceded once and again with his father in *David*'s behalf. *CHRIST* ever liveth, to plead his blood, and make intercession for transgressors.—*Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garment, even to*

* Rom. v. 19, 21. † John xv. 15.
‡ *Horace* calls *Virgil*, *animæ dimidium meæ*.
‖ *Philem. ver.* 12, 17.

to his sword, and his bow, and his girdle *. Our REDEEMER, without stripping himself, has clothed us (such is the prerogative of a divine person!) with the robe of his righteousness, and with the garment of his salvation. He has consigned over to us all the merit of his holy life and propitiatory death.

CHRIST stands related to his people, not as a friend only, but as a *parent*. He is called by a prophet, THE EVERLASTING FATHER†; and we are said by an apostle, to be *his children* ‡.—Children look upon themselves, as interested in the wealth of their parents. They expect, and not without reasonable ground, to reap benefit from it, while the parents live; and to become possessors of it, when they die. Accordingly the father says in the gospel, *Son, all that I have is thine* ‖.—Since the high and holy EMMANUEL vouchsafes to be our FATHER, can we suppose him less generous than an earthly parent? or can we imagine that *his* children shall have less to hope, than the heirs of an earthly progenitor? May we not, ought we not to regard all his communicable goods, all the benefits resulting from his meritorious sufferings and perfect obedience, as our portion?—Especially, since he is the *testator* § also; has bequeathed them to us by will; and, having submitted to death, they become legally ours.

I am the VINE, says our LORD, *ye are the branches*††. They who believe, are ingrafted into *CHRIST*. Take notice of a cyon. What are the consequences of its *ingrafture?* It is embodied with the substance of the tree, and partakes of its fatness. The sap, imbibed by the root, circulates into it; gives it vegetable life; fills it with buds, decks it with blossoms, and loads it with fruit.—If then we are one with *CHRIST*, as much as the branch is one with the stock, it must follow, even upon the principles of common experience, that his

* 1 Sam. xviii. 4. † Is. 6. 9. ‡ Heb. ii. 13.
‖ Luke xv. 31. § Heb. ix. 17. †† John xv. 5.

his *wiſdom* is ours, to enlighten us; his *righteouſneſs* is ours, to juſtify us; his *Spirit* is ours, to ſanctify us; his *redemption* is ours, to make us completely and eternally happy.

CHRIST is united to his people by a tie cloſer and dearer than the parental. They are not only his children, but his *ſpouſe*. He is often called their bridegroom, and is not aſhamed to avow the tender engagement: *I will betroth thee to me for ever. Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteouſneſs, and in judgment, and in loving-kindneſs, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulneſs* *. The condeſcending GOD multiplies, diverſifies, accumulates his words: and this, with admirable propriety, as well as ſurpaſſing goodneſs. The honour is ſo *high*, and the favour ſo *great*, we ſhould hardly know how to believe it, and hardly venture to apply it. Leſt therefore, by a ſingle expreſſion, it ſhould not be ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, it ſtands ratified by repeated aſſeverations, and with all the energy of language: ſo that, be the grace ever ſo aſtoniſhing, we are aſſured, the fact is equally certain; he that is *our* MAKER, is alſo *our* HUSBAND †.

Let us conſider what follows upon ſuch an union. We may take for an example the caſe of *Boaz* and *Ruth*. Soon as their nuptials were ſolemnized, ſhe that was poor, became rich; from a gleaner in the field, ſhe commenced *miſtreſs* of the harveſt; and from abiding by the maidens, had a ſeat at the maſter's table.—And if we are united to *CHRIST* by a marriage-contract, the ſame effects will take place. We that were poor, are rich in him; we who had nothing, poſſeſs all things in *CHRIST;* we that dwell in duſt, are made *to ſit together* with our divine HUSBAND in heavenly places ‡.

If you chuſe ſome modern exemplification, what can

* Hoſ. ii. 19, 20. † Iſ. liv. 5.

‡ Eph. ii. 6.

can be more pertinent than the remarkable inſtance of your neighbour *Arietta?* She was lately left a widow, by the diſſolute and extravagant *Bellario;* her circumſtances miſerably embaraſſed, and the little eſtate deeply mortgaged; her friends looked ſhy, and her creditors became clamorous; ſcarce a day paſſed, but it made ſome new diſcovery of debts contracted by the deceaſed: ſo that the affairs of the ſurvivor appeared with a more melancholy aſpect, and in a leſs retrievable condition.—But, having won, firſt the compaſſion, then the affection, of the wealthy and illuſtrious *Philander;* how happily is the face of things altered! All her *debts* devolve upon him, and all his *dignity* is derived to her *. He ſtands reſponſible for whatever ſhe *owes;* and ſhe is a ſharer in whatever he *poſſeſſes.* Tho' little leſs than ruined by her late huſband, ſhe is more than reſtored by her preſent; and has reaſon to rejoice in his affluence, and to glory in his honours. —Have not we alſo reaſon to rejoice in our heavenly BRIDEGROOM? ſince a far more glorious exchange ſubſiſts between him and his myſtical ſpouſe. He has bore the *curſe,* that we may inherit the *bleſſing. Sin* was charged on him, that *righteouſneſs* might be imputed to us. In a word, he has ſuſtained all our miſeries, that he might impart to us all his benefits.—Has the law any demand †? It muſt go to him for ſatisfaction. Have we any wants? We may look to him for a ſupply; to HIM, *Theron, in whom it has pleaſed the FATHER, that all fulneſs ſhould dwell* ‡.

* *Ubi tu Caius, ibi ego Caia,* was the *Roman* maxim. Agreeably to this rule, which has obtained among all civilized nations, the ſcripture calls *the church* by the name of her divine *huſband.* Compare *Jer.* xxiii. 5, 6. with *Jer.* xxxiii. 15, 16.

† The demands of the law are—perfect obedience; *Thou ſhalt love the LORD thy GOD with* all *thy heart.*—To which, in caſe of diſobedience, is ſuperadded condign puniſhment; Curſed *is he that continueth not in all things.*

‡ Col. i. 19.

If any thing can expreſs an union more intimate and inſeparable than the conjugal, it is that of the members with the *head*. And this image is uſed by the HOLY GHOST, to ſhadow forth the connection between *CHRIST* and the faithful. He is the *head over all things*, with reſpect to rule and ſupremacy; but a head of union and influence, with reſpect *to the church* *.—The head and the members conſtitute one natural body; *CHRIST* and his church compoſe one myſtical body. What kindneſs is done, what injury is offered to the members, the head regards them as done to itſelf. Accordingly, *CHRIST* ſays to the outrageous *Saul*, who made havock of the church, *Saul, Saul, why perſecuteſt thou ME* †? He declares, concerning thoſe indigent *Chriſtians*, to whoſe neceſſities we adminiſter relief; *Inaſmuch as ye have done it unto them, ye have done it unto ME* ‡.—The animal ſpirits formed in the head, are formed for the benefit of the whole body, and deſigned for the uſe of all the members.—So the righteouſneſs wrought by *JESUS CHRIST*, is wrought out for his whole myſtical body, and intended for the advantage of all his people, to be the cauſe of their juſtification, and the purchaſe of their ſalvation.

Being then ſo nearly related, ſo cloſely united to the bleſſed *JESUS*, it is no wonder that believers are now loved with the ſame fatherly love, and will hereafter be partakers of the ſame heavenly glory.—What might we not expect from the divine REDEEMER, if he vouchſafed to acknowledge but *one* of theſe endearing names? Since he has engaged himſelf to us by *all* the ties of affinity and affection; may we not promiſe ourſelves, and with the aſſurance of hope, every good thing; *even all the fulneſs of GOD* ‖ our Saviour?—Does not each of theſe tender relations, ſubſiſting between *CHRIST* and his ſaints, imply an entire property in one another, and a mutual participation

* Eph. i. 22. † Acts ix. 4. ‡ Matth. xxv. 40. ‖ Eph. iii. 19.

ticipation of all that belongs to either?—*My beloved is mine, and I am his*,—I dare not say, is the *posey* of the mystical ring,—but it is the undoubted *effect* of this divine union.

How pleasing, yet how amazing the thought! Shall we, who say to corruption, *Thou art my father;* and to the worm, *Thou art my mother and my sister* *; shall *we* be permitted to say, concerning the HEAD of all principality and power, *We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones* †? —What a mercy might we esteem it, not to be confounded before a MAJESTY so exalted and sublime! What a favour, to obtain the least propitious regard from the KING immortal and invisible! What an honour, to be admitted into his family, and numbered among the meanest of his servants!—But to be his *adopted* children; to be his *espoused* bride; to be the *members* of his sacred body; —to have HIM for our everlasting *Father*, HIM for the *bridegroom* of our souls, HIM for our heavenly *head;* who is the MAKER of all worlds, and the SOVEREIGN of all creatures! What words can duly celebrate, what heart can sufficiently admire, the condescension and the love of our adorable *JESUS?* or who can justly question the fruits of such a fellowship, and the consequences of such an union? Question them! No, the fruits are infallibly sure, as the privilege is inexpressibly great.

Let me once again introduce a great and venerable witness of both these truths. "*Laban* spake high, "when he said, *These children are mine, and all these* "*things thou seest are mine*. But how high and glo- "rious is that which may be said of a justified person! "All thou hearest of *CHRIST* is thine; his life is "thine, his death is thine, his obedience, merit, spi- "rit, all thine ‡."—Rich and important words! Than which nothing can give us a juster or fuller explanation

* Job xvii. 14. † Eph. v. 30.

‡ See *Dr* LIGHTFOOT'S *works*, vol. II. p. 1077.

nation of the apoſtle's aſſertion, *We are partakers of CHRIST* *.

When ſome foreign ladies, of the firſt quality, paid a viſit to *Leonidas*'s queen; the talk turned upon their rich cloaths, their coſtly jewels, and ſplendid equipage. After they had ſeverally diſplayed each her own grandeur, they inquired after her Majeſty's finery; what *ſhe* had to diſtinguiſh her from the vulgar? —She replied, *My illuſtrious huſband*†. What elſe? *My illuſtrious huſband*.—And as often as they repeated the ſame queſtion, ſhe returned the ſame anſwer.—Could this queen ſpeak in ſuch admiring, rejoicing, ſelf-gratulating terms of her royal conſort? And ſhall not vile ſinners look upon their REDEEMER,—that all-glorious, yet all-condeſcending bridegroom; who is full of grace and truth, full of merit and righteouſneſs;—ſhall not they *much more* look upon HIM as their honour and their joy; the object of their dependence, and the cauſe of their boaſting?

I ſhould find it difficult to refrain from the farther proſecution of ſo engaging a topic, did I not propoſe to wait upon my *Theron* very ſpeedily. Then I ſhall have an opportunity of pouring into his boſom all the fulneſs of my heart, with regard to this delightful ſubject.—In the mean time, let me exhort my dear friend to be of good comfort. *Heavineſs may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*‡. This ſorrow of which you complain, may be the ſeed of ſpiritual and eternal conſolation.

While I am writing, there appears full in my view, one of the fineſt *rainbows* I ever beheld. *It compaſſeth the heavens with a glorious circle;* ſo glorious, that it is no diſparagement of the almighty CREATOR, to ſay,

* Heb. iii. 14.

† The amiable and heroic *Panthea* expreſſes herſelf in much the ſame manner, concerning her gallant huſband *Abradates*; Συ γαρ εμοιγε μαλιστα κοσμος ησθ. XENOPH. Cyropæd. lib. VI.

‡ Pſal. xxx. 5.

ſay, *the hands of the MOST HIGH have bended it* *.—On what foundation, would I aſk, is that ſtately and beautiful arch raiſed? from what ſource do all its radiant and lovely colours ſpring? It is raiſed on a *gloomy* aſſemblage of vapours; and all its rich tinctures ſpring from a *touring* cloud.—Thus does the bleſſed GOD, on a conviction of guilt and a ſenſe of ruin, ſpread faith, paint holineſs, and diffuſe gladneſs. May all theſe, ere long, ariſe in my *Theron*'s breaſt! and each be—*bright*, as that reſplendent bow,—*laſting*, as the ſun that creates it!

In the mean time, it is the ardent wiſh of my ſoul, and ſhall be my frequent prayer to GOD, *That both our hearts may be comforted, being knit together in love, unto all riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding* †, in this great myſtery of godlineſs.—What vigour of expreſſion, what exuberance of ideas, and, above all, what diſtinguiſhed privileges are here!—*aſſurance*,—*full* aſſurance,—*riches* of the full aſſurance,—*all* riches of the full aſſurance of underſtanding,—in reference to our union with *CHRIST*, and its unutterably-precious effects!—Can the orator expreſs more? can the ſinner deſire more? can the ſaint, I had almoſt ſaid, can the archangel enjoy more?—May this be the portion of my dear *Theron*, and of

His ever faithful

ASPASIO.

* Eccluſ. xliii. 12. † Col. ii. 1.

THERON AND ASPASIO:

OR, A

SERIES

OF

DIALOGUES.

DIALOGUE XV.

ASPASIO had taken leave of his friend *Camillus*, and was come to reviſit *Theron;* whoſe thoughts ſeemed to be in a ſtate of much fluctuation, and no ſmall anxiety; hoping, that ſome proper converſation on the *grace* and *privileges* of the everlaſting goſpel, might compoſe and comfort his mind; might, while his heart was ſoftened by humbling convictions, fix the ſtamp of genuine Chriſtianity; and deliver his whole ſoul into the mould * of evangelical religion.

When

* *Deliver into the mould*—This is the literal tranſlation, and exact ſenſe of St *Paul's* phraſe, Εις ον παρεδοθητε τυπον διδαχης. Rom. vi. 17.—Which, as it contains a *beautiful alluſion*, conveys alſo a very *inſtructive admonition:* intimating, that our minds, all pliant and ductile, ſhould be conformed to the refined precepts of the goſpel, as liquid metals take the figure of ſome elegant mould, into which they are caſt.

When sorrow wounds the breast, as ploughs the glebe,
And hearts obdurate feel her soft'ning show'r,
Her seed celestial then glad Wisdom sows;
Her golden harvests triumph in the soil *.

He arrived pretty late in the evening; and, being somewhat weary with the journey, soon withdrew to his repose.—The next morning, as *Theron* walked abroad, to taste the cool delights of the dawn; he was agreeably surprised, by meeting *Aspasio*.

Ther. So soon awake, my worthy friend! and after so much fatigue on the preceding day!—I had not the least expectation of your company, till breakfast. Then indeed I promised myself a double regale;—the refreshments exhibited on the table; and those *wholesome words of our* LORD JESUS CHRIST †, which, more precious than manna, drop—

Asp. How, *Theron!*—Have you also learned those soothing arts, which polish the speech, to deprave our sentiments? Could I have suspected the inchanting wiles of *flattery*, from my sincere, my tried, my bosom friend?

Ther. Your friend is still sincere, and his words are very remote from flattery.—How welcome to the wind bound *mariner*, weary with expectation, and sick with disappointments, is the visit of a propitious gale! How welcome to the *fields*, parched with drought, and gasping for moisture, are copious showers of rain! How acceptable to the *Israelites*, travelling through the inhospitable desert, and pining away for want of the fruits of the earth, was the miraculous supply of heavenly bread!—Yet neither propitious gales to the wind-bound mariner, nor copious showers to the thirsty soil, nor heavenly bread to the famished *Israelites*, could be more welcome, than your late conversation, and later correspondence, to my anxious soul.

Asp.

* Night-Thoughts. † 1 Tim. vi. 3.

Asp. Why, I thought you looked upon *my* notions as chimerical. Is *Theron* alſo became credulous? Like one of us weak-headed believers!—has *he* quitted the ſtrong-holds of reaſon? is *he* vanquiſhed by the ſling-ſtone of faith; or can *he* ſubmit to this ſtrange method of ſalvation, by embracing the righteouſneſs, and relying on the obedience of another?

Ther. I find, my reaſon was a feeble guide, or I myſelf not faithful to its genuine dictates. I was blinded with prejudice; I was intoxicated with pride; a vain conceit of my moral powers betrayed me, as I fear it has betrayed many, into a contempt of the evangelical righteouſneſs.—I held what I thought an honour to human nature. I now retract my opinion. I now perceive, that, as my *natural light* could not diſcover the way, neither can my *perſonal obedience* put me in poſſeſſion of life and ſalvation. My true glory, and real happineſs, I would henceforth derive from the bleſſed *JESUS*.—No more banter, *Aſpaſio*:—have done;—I am ſerious, and very much in earneſt; ſo much in earneſt, that if all my acquaintance of the *Phariſaical* turn, or if all my brothers of the ſmile, ſhould rally me on the ſubject, I would frankly acknowledge my error, and as freely ſign my recantation.

Aſp. My dear *Theron*, I applaud your reſolution. You have no more cauſe to be aſhamed of ſuch a practice, than *Philip* had to be aſhamed of the imperfection in his limbs; when, being obſerved to go lame, with a wound received in battle, he had this conſolation ſuggeſted by one of his courtiers: "Never bluſh, my Royal Sir, for a defect which puts "you in mind of your *valour*, every ſtep you take."—To ſacrifice our prejudices in the ſearch of truth, is no leſs honourable than to be marked with a ſcar in the defence of our country.

I beg pardon for my pleaſantry. Since you are ſo very ſerious, a gay air was quite unſeaſonable.—You cannot

cannot often complain, that I am guilty of this fault. Nor can you eaſily imagine the ſatisfaction I ſhall enjoy, if either my letters or my diſcourſe, have adminiſtered *any advantage* to my friend. I ſhall note it down among the diſtinguiſhed bleſſings of my life; and have an additional obligation to love the beneficent AUTHOR of all good.

But as I cannot be a furtherer of your happineſs without the greateſt delight, ſo I cannot be a witneſs of your ſolicitude without a painful regret. You muſt therefore permit me to aſk the cauſe of that unuſual *vehemence* which I obſerve in your ſpeech, and of that deep *concern* which I read in your countenance.

Ther. I have been conſidering very attentively, what is the *preſent* ſtate, and what is likely to be the *final* condition of my ſoul.

——————My hopes and fears
Start up alarm'd; and o'er life's narrow verge
Look down—on what? A fathomleſs abyſs,
A vaſt eternity!

My *ſins*, at the ſame time, like an armed hoſt, are ſet in dreadful array, and ſurround me on every ſide. —*Juſtice*, like an injured and incenſed foe, unſheaths the ſword, and makes a loud demand for vengeance. —No righteouſneſs of *my own* preſents itſelf, to which I may fly for refuge.—The method of ſalvation, in which I formerly confided, is a bridge *broken down;* and leaves me, without any poſſibility of eſcape abandoned to the approaching enemy.

To a perſon in ſuch deplorable circumſtances, how reviving, how delightful, is the very thought of being intereſted in the great REDEEMER's righteouſneſs! I don't wonder now at a ſaying of *Luther's*, which I have ſometimes exploded, as ſtrangely extravagant: "That, upon the diſcovery of this glorious "righteouſneſs, the gates of Paradiſe ſeemed to fly "open before him, and the dawn of heaven was all "in view."

Talking in this manner, they came to an elevated *terrace:* which, about an hour before, had been shaved by the ſithe, and emitted all the freſhneſs of new-mown herbage.—On one ſide, a fine *champaign country* ſtretched its wide dimenſions.—On the other, a *flower-garden* exhibited the laſt ornaments of the year.—Here you might ſtill ſee the tufted vermilion, and the full-blown ivory, glittering through ſpangles of liquid cryſtal.—There you might trace the foot-ſteps of the early cattle, by many a recent print on the dewy lawn.—On the walls and eſpaliers, autumn had ſpread her ſtores; and was beginning to beautify their rinds with many a *ruddy ſtreak*, or to breathe over their gloſſy ſkins her delicate and *inimitable bloom*.

Aſp. See, ſaid *Aſpaſio*, the wiſdom and benignity, which, in amiable and inſeparable conjunction, diſplay themſelves through the whole œconomy of the univerſe: *GOD has made every thing beautiful in his time* *; every thing ſerviceable in its place. A little while ago, the flowery meads delighted our eyes, and the melodious birds charmed our ears; now the taſteful fruits are preparing their dainties; and preſenting us with a collation, to regale our palate.—The whole earth, and all the ſeaſons, are rich with our CREATOR's goodneſs. Yea, the whole earth, and all that repleniſhes it, all that ſurrounds it, are full of his preſence. HE it is, who

> *Warms in the ſun, refreſhes in the breeze,*
> *Glows in the ſtars, and bloſſoms in the trees;*
> *Lives through all life, extends through all extent,*
> *Spreads undivided, operates unſpent* †.

An habitual belief of this truth, gives nature her *loveliеſt* aſpect, and lends her the moſt conſummate power to pleaſe. The breath of violets, and the bluſh of roſes; the muſic of the woods, and the meanders of the ſtream; the aſpiring hill, the extended plain, and all the decorations of the landſcape; *then* appear in

* Eccl. iii. 11. † POPE's *Eth. epiſt.*

in their higheſt attractives; *then* touch the ſoul with the moſt refined ſatisfaction; when GOD is ſeen,—when GOD is heard,—and GOD enjoyed in all.——

——Is *Theron* loſt in thought, and deprived of ſpeech? Is HE alone ſilent, while all things ſpeak their MAKER's praiſe?—Does faith throw a ſhade over the works of creation? Does it not heighten their beauties, and enliven their graces?—The *religiosus* is the only *true* philoſopher; and the pleaſures of imagination never acquire their proper reliſh, till they are ripened by the exerciſe of devotion. With this view then, ſince my friend forbears, let *me* attempt to ſpeak; not to increaſe his knowledge, but to cheriſh faith, and cultivate devotion in us both.

The ſpacious canopy * over our heads, is painted with blue; and the ample carpet under our feet, is tinged with green. Theſe colours, by their *ſoft* and *chearing* qualities, yield a perpetual refreſhment to the eye †. Whereas, had the face of nature gliſtered with white, or glowed with ſcarlet; ſuch ardent and dazzling hues would, inſtead of exhilarating, have fatigued the ſight.—Beſides, as the ſeveral brighter colours are interſperſed, and form the *pictures* in this magnificent piece; the green and the blue conſtitute an

* What *Aſpaſio* calls the canopy, *Iſaiah* deſcribes by רקע Which we tranſlate *as a curtain*; but the exact ſignification is, *Sicut tenue, vel tenuiſſimum quid;* Like ſome finely-attenuated expanſe. Not like the curtains or the covering of the tabernacle, which were goats' hair and badgers' ſkins, ſhaggy and coarſe; but like ſome *very fine* membrane, ſmooth and elegant, nicely poliſhed and inimitably delicate. Than which compariſon nothing can more perfectly correſpond with the aſpect of the ſky, *Iſ.* xl. 22.

† ——————————*Gay* green,
Thou ſmiling nature's univerſal robe!
United light and ſhade! where the ſight dwells,
With growing ſtrength, and ever-new delight.
THOMSON's *Spring*,

an admirable *ground*, which shews them all, in their highest lustre, and to the utmost advantage *.

Had the *air* been considerably *grosser*, it would have dimmed the rays of the sun, and darkened the chearful day; our lungs had been clogged in their vital functions; men had been suffocated, without the strangling noose; or drowned, without the overwhelming flood.—Was it several degrees more *subtile*, birds would not be able to wing their way through the firmament; nor could the clouds be sustained in so attenuated an atmosphere. It would elude the organs of respiration; we should gasp for breath, with as much difficulty, and with as little success, as fishes out of their native element.

The *ground* also is wrought into the most proper temperature. Was it of a *firmer* consistence, it would be impenetrable to the plough, and unmanageable by the spade.—Was it of a *laxer* composition, it would be incapable of supporting its own furniture. The light mould would be swept away by whirling winds; or the oozy glebe soaked into sloughs by the descending rains.—Because every situation suits not every plant; but that which is a nurse to one, often proves a stepmother to others; therefore the qualities of the earth are so abundantly diversified, as properly to accommodate every species of vegetation. We have a variety of intermediate soils, from the *loose* disjointed sand, to the *stiff* cohesive clay; from the rough projections of the *craggy* cliff, to the softly-swelling bed of the *smooth* parterre.

The *sea* carries equal evidences of a most wise and gracious

* If the reader has patience to go thro' the following essay, he will find it in the issue, not altogether foreign to the main subject. If he pleases to consider it, as a kind of *practical comment*, on that lovely celebration of providential goodness, *His tender mercies are over all his works*;—this may possibly alleviate the toil of perusing, and reconcile him to the length of the descant.

gracious ordination.—Was it *larger*, we ſhould want land for the purpoſes of paſturage, and the operations of huſbandry. We ſhould be deſtitute of ſufficient room for mines and foreſts; our ſubterranean warehouſes, and our æreal timber-yards.—Was it *ſmaller*, it would not be capable of recruiting the ſky with a proper quantity of vaporous exhalations, nor of ſupplying the earth with the neceſſary quota of fructifying ſhowers.

Do we not diſcern very apparent ſtrokes of ſkill, and the moſt pregnant proofs of goodneſs, in each individual object? in the various *tenants* of the globe, and the ſeveral *appurtenances* of this great dwelling? —It is needleſs to expatiate upon the more eminent and conſpicuous beauties; all that *ſhines* in the heavens, and all that *ſmiles* on the earth. Theſe ſpeak to every ear, theſe ſhew to every eye, the adorable munificence of their MAKER.—It is needleſs to launch into the praiſes of the valleys, delicately clothed with herbage; or of the fields, richly repleniſhed with corn. Even the *ragged* rocks, which frown over the flood; the *caverned* quarries, which yawn amidſt the land; together with the mountains, thoſe *ſhapeleſs* and *enormous* protuberances, which ſeem to load the ground, and encumber the ſkies; even theſe contribute their ſhare, to increaſe the general pleaſure, and augment the general uſefulneſs. They variegate the proſpect; raiſe an agreeable horror in the beholder; and inſpire his breaſt with a religious awe. They add new charms to the wide level of our plains; and ſhelter, like a ſcreen, the warm lap of our vales.

We are delighted with the ſolemn gloom, and magnificent aſpect, of the foreſt. One who ſaw the cedars of *Lebanon*, was tranſported with admiration at their ample trunks, and towering heads, their diffuſive ſpread, and verdant grandeur. Compared with which, the ſtately elm is but a reed; and the branching

ing oak a mere ſhrub.—Was our ſight qualified for the ſearch, we ſhould diſcover a *ſymmetry* and a *dignity*, altogether as perfect, and far more wonderful, in thoſe groves of *moſs* * which adhere to the rude ſtone. We ſhould contemplate, with greater ſurpriſe, if not with greater rapture, thoſe diminutive plantations, which ſtrike their haſty roots in the mouldy confection, or wave their curious umbrage over the periſhed pickle †.

Who is not charmed with the vine, and its generous warming juices? with the melon, and its delicious cooling pulp? Yet, were all our trees to produce fruits of ſuch exalted qualities, or of ſuch an agreeable reliſh, what would become of the *birds!* How ſmall a ſcantling of ſuch choice delicacies would voracious man reſign to their enjoyment!—That proviſion may be made for the meaneſt *vagrant* of the air, as well as for the moſt renowned ſovereign of a nation; there is, in all places, a large growth of ſhrubs, covered annually with a harveſt of coarſe and hardy berries: ſo

coarſe

* See, for a proof of this remark, the explanation of the *tenth plate*, in that very curious, very entertaining, and no leſs inſtructive piece, entitled, *Micrographia Reſtaurata.*—Where our author compares the ſize of this little vegetable, with the dimenſions of thoſe vaſt trees, which grow in the vigorous climates of *Guinea* and *Brazil.* The trunks of which are, according to the report of travellers, twenty feet in diameter. Whereas, the body of this minute plant, meaſures no more than the ſixtieth part of an inch. So that, upon a calculation, the thickneſs of the former exceeds that of the latter, 2,985,984 millions of times.—So prodigiouſly various are the works of the CREATOR.

† That whitiſh kind of down, which ſhags the putrefying pickle, which incruſts the ſurface of ſome corrupted liquors, and conſtitutes what we call *mouldineſs*, is really a clutter of little plants. Each has a root and a ſtalk: each ſpreads its branches, and produces ſeed in abundance.

Radiceſque ſuas habet, exilemque coronam,
Frondeſque, fructumque gerit, velut ardua quercus.

coarſe in their taſte, that they are unworthy of the acceptance of man; ſo *hardy* in their make, that they endure the extremeſt ſeverities of the weather, and furniſh the feathered tribe with a ſtanding repaſt, amidſt all the deſolations of winter.

The fir, with her ſilver bark, and ſhapely cone; the beech *, with her quivering leaves and embowering ſhade; are ſtately decorations of our rural ſeats. But, if there were no entangling *thickets*, no prickly *thorns*, where would the farmer procure fences ſo cloſely wattled, or ſo ſtrongly armed †? How could he guard the ſcene of his labours, or ſecure his vegetable wealth, from the flocks and the herds; thoſe roving plunderers, which accede to no treaty, but that of *forcible* reſtraint; ſubmit to no laws, but thoſe of the *coercive* kind?

Moſt people are fond of the purſlane's fleſhy leaves, and the ramified fatneſs of the brocoli; the potato's mealy

* The *fir*, the *beech*, and ſuch like trees, are called in *Hebrew*, נחלים Iſ. vii. 19. Which word is rendered, but I think very improperly, *buſhes*. It rather ſignifies the *grand* and moſt *admired* plants. It is intended as a contraſt to the coarſe and deſpicable thorns, mentioned in the preceding clauſe. And both taken together expreſs all ſorts of trees, from the towering cedar to the grovelling ſhrub.

† Something to this purpoſe is hinted in the prophecy of *Iſaiah*, by יראה עשד ושית *terriculam entum ſentium et veprium;* the terror of thorns and briers; meaning thoſe ſharp and ragged mounds, with which vineyards, corn-fields, and other cultivated ſpots, were uſually incloſed; which *deterred* the moſt adventurous cattle from forcing, or attempting to force a paſſage.—The words are ſomewhat obſcure, and have been greatly miſunderſtood. But, thus interpreted, they afford an eaſy ſenſe, and perfectly coincide with the context: implying, "that places, formerly fenced about with abundance of care, "ſhould lie open, and expoſed to every wandering foot: that "tillage ſhould be diſcontinued; and the whole country de"generate into a confuſed, diſorderly waſte, without either "the diſtributions of property, or the improvements of in"duſtry." *Iſ.* vii. 25. Vid. VITRING. *in loc.*

mealy orbs, and the lentile's ſucculent pods. We ſpare no toil, we grudge no expence, to have them flouriſh in our gardens, and ſerved up at our tables.—But there are innumerable herbs, which paſs under the contemptible character of *weeds;* and yet are altogether as deſirable to many claſſes of creatures, as theſe culinary gifts to mankind. Who ſhall be at the pains to plant, to water, to cultivate, ſuch deſpicable productions? Man would rather *extirpate*, than *propagate*, theſe incumbrances of his acres. Therefore Providence vouchſafes to be their gardener. Providence has wrought off their ſeeds into ſuch a lightneſs of ſubſtance, that they are carried abroad with the undulations of the air: or, if too heavy to be wafted by the breeze, they are faſtened to wings of down, which facilitate their flight; or elſe, are incloſed in a ſpringy caſe, which, forcibly burſting, ſhoots and ſpreads them on every ſide.—By ſome ſuch means, the reproducing principle is diſſeminated, the univerſal granary is filled, and the univerſal board furniſhed. The buzzing inſect, and the creeping worm, have each his *bill of fare*. Each enjoys a never-failing treat, equivalent to our fineſt veniſon, or to the "fat of kidneys "of wheat *."

As the ſeeds of ſome plants are moſt artfully ſcattered abroad, when ripe; the ſeeds of others are moſt carefully *guarded*, till they come to maturity; and, by both contrivances, every ſpecies is not barely preſerved,

* *The fat of kidneys of wheat*, Deut. xxxii. 14. A ſentence rich with elegance! ſuch as would have ſhone in *Pindar*, or been admired by *Longinus*. Yet, I believe, its principal beauty conſiſts, in an alluſion to a remarkable *jewiſh* rite. In every ſacrifice, the fat of the kidneys was, as the moſt delicious part of the victim, ſet apart for GOD, and conſumed on his altar. Here even the common people were treated like the DEITY. They lay under no reſtraint, either from the divine prohibition, or the ſcarcity of the grain; but were copiouſly ſupplied, and freely regaled themſelves with the *choiceſt fineſt* part of this firſt and beſt of vegetables.

ſerved, but in a manner eternized.—Some are lodged in the centre of a large *pulp;* which is, at once, their defence, and their nouriſhment. This we find exemplified in the taſteful apple, and the juicy pear.—Some, beſides the ſurrounding pulp, are incloſed in a thick *ſhell*, hard and impenetrable as ſtone. We cannot pluck and eat one of thoſe downy peaches, or incrimſoned nectarines, which ſo beautifully emboſs the wall, without finding a proof of this precaution.—Caſt your eye upon the walnuts, which ſtud the branches of that ſpreading tree. Before theſe are gathered, the increaſe of the cold, and the emptineſs of the gardens, will ſharpen the appetite of the birds. To ſecure the fine kernel from the depradations of their buſy aſſailing bills, it is fortified with a ſtrong *incloſure* of wood, and with the addition of a diſguſtful bitter *rind*.

If *graſs* was as ſcarce as the *Guernſey-lily*, or as difficultly raiſed as the delicate tuberoſe, how certainly, and how ſpeedily, muſt many millions of quadrupeds periſh with famine! Since all the cattle owe their chief ſubſiſtence to this vegetable, by a ſingular beneficence in the divine œconomy, *it waiteth not*, like the corn-field and the garden-bed, *for* the annual labours of *man* *. When once ſown, tho' ever ſo frequently cropped, it revives with the returning ſeaſon, and flouriſhes in a kind of perennial verdure. It covers our meadows, diffuſes itſelf over the plains, ſprings up in every glade of the foreſt, and ſpreads a ſide-board in the moſt ſequeſtered nook.

Since the nutriment of vegetables themſelves lies hid under the ſoil, or floats up and down in the air; *beneath*, they plunge their roots ‖ into the ground, and diſperſe every way their fibrous ſuckers, to explore the latent, and attract the proper nouriſhment; *above*, they expand a multitude of leaves ‖‖, which, like

* Mic. v. 7.

‖‖ *Job* moſt beautifully alludes to theſe two ſources of ve-

like so many open mouths, catch the rains as they fall; imbibe the dews as they distil; and transmit them, through their nice orifices, to the heart of the plant, or the lobes of the fruit.

I have touched upon the *insensible* creation; and pointed out the care of a condescending Providence, exercised over these lowest formations of nature.—The *animal* world, *Theron*, falls to your share. It is yours to descant upon those higher orders of existence; and shew us the goodness of GOD, extending its indulgent regards to them and their interests, as tenderly, as officiously, as a hen spreadeth her wings * over her infant brood.

Ther. The subject is in good hands. Let *part the second* be of the same strain with *part the first*, and there will be no occasion to wish for a new speaker. As to myself, I have very little inclination to talk. But I have an ear open and attentive to your discourse.

Asp. You put me in mind of the philosopher, who presumed to read a lecture on the art of war, in the presence of *Hannibal*. But his impertinence was *voluntary*, mine is *constrained*.—Since you injoin me this office, let us pass from the vegetable, to the animal world. Here we shall find no tribe, no individual neglected. The superior classes want no demonstration of their excellent accomplishments. At the first glimpse, they challenge our approbation, they command our applause. Even the *more ignoble* forms of animated existence are most wisely circumstanced, and most liberally accommodated.

They all generate in that particular season, which is sure to supply them with a stock of provision, sufficient

getable fertility; *My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch.* Job xxix. 19.

* This seems to be the image used by the *Psalmist*, Psal. cxlv. 9. And a most amiable image, as well as a most picturesque representation, it is.

ficient both for themſelves, and their increaſing families.—The ſheep yean, when there is a profuſion of *nutrimental herbage* on the ſoil, to fill their udders, and create milk for their lambs.—The birds lay their eggs, and hatch their young, when *myriads* of new-born, tender inſects ſwarm on every ſide: ſo that the caterer, whether it be the male or female parent, needs only to alight on the ground, or make a little excurſion into the air; and they find a feaſt ready dreſſed, and all at free coſt, for the clamant mouths at home.

Their love to their offspring, while they continue in a helpleſs ſtate, is *invincibly* ſtrong. Whereas the very moment they are able to ſhift for themſelves; when the parental affection would be attended with much ſolicitude, and productive of no advantage; it *vaniſhes*, as tho' it had never been.—The hen which marches at the head of her little brood, would fly in the eyes of a maſtiff, or even encounter a lion in their defence. Yet, within a few weeks, ſhe abandons her chickens to the wide world, and not ſo much as knows them any more.

If the GOD of *Iſrael* inſpired *Bezaleel* and *Aholiab* with *wiſdom, and underſtanding, and knowledge in all manner of workmanſhip* *; the GOD of nature has inſtructed the wild and warbling inhabitants of the bough.—The *ſkill*, with which they erect their houſes, and adjuſt their apartments, is inimitable. The *caution*, with which they ſecrete their abodes from the ſearching eye, or intruding foot, is admirable. No general, though fruitful in expedients, could plan a more artful concealment. No architect, with his rule and line, could build ſo commodious a lodgment.—Give the moſt celebrated artificer the ſame materials, which theſe weak and unexperienced creatures uſe; let a *Jones*, or a *De Moivre*, have only ſome rude ſtraws or ugly ſticks; a few bits of dirt, or ſcraps of hair; a ſorry lock of wool, or a coarſe ſprig of moſs; and what

* Exod. xxxi. 3.

what works, fair with delicacy, or fit for ſervice, could *they* produce?

We extol the commander, who knows how to take advantage of the ground; who can make the ſun and wind fight for him, as well as his troops; and, by every circumſtance, embaraſſes the forces of the enemy, but expedites the action, and advances the ſucceſs of his own. Does not this praiſe belong to our *feathery leaders?* who pitch their tent, or (if you pleaſe) fix their penſile camp, on the dangerous branches that wave aloft in the air, or dance over the eddies of the ſtream. By which judicious diſpoſition, the vernal gales rock their cradle, and the murmuring waters lull their young; while both concur to terrify the ſhepherd, and keep the ſchoolboy at a trembling diſtance.—Some hide their little houſehold from view, amidſt the ſhelter of entangled furze. Others remove it from reach, in the centre of a thorny thicket. And, by one ſtratagem or another, they are generally as *ſecure* and *unmoleſted* in their feeble habitations, as the foxes, which entrench themſelves deep in the earth, or as the conies, which retire to the rock for their * citadel.

If the *ſwan* has large ſweeping wings, and a copious ſtock of feathers, to ſpread over her callow brood; the *wren* makes up by contrivance, what is deficient in her bulk.—Small as ſhe is, ſhe intends † to bring forth,

* Prov. xxx. 26.

† *Aſpaſio* has ventured to ſay, *She intends;*—and one is almoſt tempted to think, from the preparation which the little creature makes, that ſhe had really ſat down, and counted the coſt, and concerted her ſcheme. As though ſhe had deliberated with herſelf:—"I ſhall lay, not a couple of eggs, but near "a ſcore. From theſe I am to produce a houſe full of young. "But how ſhall I have warmth (unleſs art ſupply what nature "has denied) ſufficient to hatch the embrios, or cheriſh the "infants?"—The truth, I believe is, that in all her ſeeming foreſight, and circumſpect behaviour, ſhe acts ſhe knows not what.

forth, and will be obliged to nurſe up, a very numerous iſſue. Therefore, with the correcteſt judgment ſhe deſigns, and with indefatigable aſſiduity finiſhes, a neſt proper for her purpoſe. It is a neat *round*, lengthened into an *oval*, bottomed and vaulted with a regular *concave*. To preſerve it from rain, it has ſeveral coatings of moſs; to defend it from cold, it has but one window, and only a ſingle door; to render it both elegant and comfortable, it has *carpets* and *hangings* of the ſofteſt fineſt down.—By the help of this curious manſion, our little lady becomes the mother of multitudes. The vivifying heat of her body is, during the time of incubation, exceedingly augmented. Her houſe is like an oven, and greatly aſſiſts in hatching her young. Which no ſooner burſt the ſhell, than they find themſelves ſcreened from the annoyance of the weather; and moſt agreeably repoſed, amidſt the ornaments of a palace, and the warmth of a bagnio.

Perhaps, we have been accuſtomed to look upon the inſects, as ſo many *rude* ſcraps of creation, and to rank them amongſt the *refuſe* of things. Whereas, if we examine them without prejudice, and with a little attention, they will appear ſome of the moſt poliſhed pieces of divine workmanſhip.—Many of them are decked with a profuſion of finery. Their *eyes* are an aſſemblage * of microſcopes; whoſe mechaniſm is inconceivably

what. Only ſhe acts what eternal wiſdom knows to be neceſſary, and what all-condeſcending goodneſs prompts her to perform.

* The *common fly*, for inſtance: who is ſurrounded with a multitude of dangers, and has neither ſtrength to reſiſt her enemies, nor a place of retreat to ſecure herſelf. For which reaſon, ſhe had need to be very vigilant, and always upon her guard. Yet her head is ſo fixed, that it is incapable of turning, in order to obſerve what paſſes, either behind or around her.—Providence therefore, ſurpriſingly wiſe in its contrivances, and equally bountiful in its gifts, has furniſhed her, not barely with a *retinue*, but with more than a *legion* of eyes.

Inſomuch,

inconceivably nice, and finished in the highest perfection. Their *dress* has all the variety and lustre of colours: it is set with an arrangement of the most brilliant gems, and bordered with fringes richer far than the most costly silks. Their *wings* are the finest expansions imaginable; cambric is mere canvas, and lawn is coarse as sackcloth, compared with those inimitable webs. The *cases* which inclose their wings, glitter with the most glossy varnish; are scooped into ornamental flutings; are studded with radiant spots; or pinked with elegant holes.—Not any among them but are equipped with weapons, or endued with dexterity, which qualify them to seize their prey, or escape their foe: to dispatch the business of their respective station, and enjoy the pleasures of their particular condition.

Now I am in a talking humour, give me leave to celebrate the endowments, and assert the honours of my puny clients; yet not so much to support *their* credit, as to magnify their *all-gracious* CREATOR. —What if the elephant is distinguished by a huge *proboscis?* His meanest relations of the reptile line are furnished with curious *antennæ;* remarkable, if not for their enormous magnitude, yet for their ready flexibility, and acute sensation: by which they explore their way, even in the darkest road; they discover and avoid whatever might defile their neat apparel, or endanger their tender lives.

Every one admires that majestic creature the *horse;* his graceful head, and ample chest; his arching neck, and flowing mane; his cleanly-turned limbs, and finely-adjusted motions. With extraordinary agility, he flings

Insomuch, that a single fly is supposed to be mistress of no less than eight thousand: every one of which is lined with a distinct optic nerve.—By means of this costly and amazing apparatus, the little creature sees on every side, with the utmost ease and with instantaneous speed; even without any motion of the eye, or any flection of the neck.

flings himself over the ditch; and, with a rapid career, pours himself * through the plain. With unwearied application, he carries his rider from one end of the country to another; and, with undaunted bravery, rushes into the fiercest rage, and amidst the thickest havock of the battle.—Yet the *grasshopper* springs with a bound altogether as brisk, if not more impetuous.—The *ant*, in proportion to its size, is equally nimble; equally strong; and will climb precipices, which the most courageous courser dares not attempt to scale.—If the *snail* is slower in her motions, she is under no necessity of treading back the ground which she has passed; because her house is a part of her travelling-equipage; and whenever she departs, she is still under her own roof; where-ever she removes, is always at home.

The *eagle*, 'tis true, is privileged with pinions that outstrip the wind. Elevated on which, she looks down on all that soars; and sees flying clouds, and straining wings far below: her optic nerve so strong, that it meets and sustains the dazzling beams of noon; her wide-surveying glance so keen, that, from those towering heights, it discerns the smallest fish, which sculks at the bottom of the river.—Yet neither is that poor outcast, the grovelling and gloomy *mole*, disregarded by divine providence. Because she is to dig a cell in the earth, and dwell, as it were, in a perpetual dungeon, her paws serve her for a pickaxe and spade. Her eye, or rather her visual speck, is sunk deep into a socket, that it may suffer no injury from her rugged situation: it requires but a very scanty communication of light, that she may have no reason to complain of her darkling abode. I called her subterranean habitation

* *Pours himself*—This is *Jeremiah*'s beautiful and expressive phrase, שפך נפש chap. viii. 6. Which *Virgil* has been ambitious to imitate;

——— *Ruunique effusi carcere.*

bitation a dungeon; and ſome people, perhaps, may think it a grave. But I revoke the expreſſion. It yields her all the ſafety of a fortified *caſtle*, and all the delight of a decorated *grot*.

Even the *ſpider*, though abhorred by mankind, is evidently the care of all-ſuſtaining heaven. She is to live upon plunder; to ſupport herſelf, by trapanning the idle, inſignificant, ſauntering fly. Suitably to ſuch an occupation, ſhe poſſeſſes a bag of glutinous moiſture. From this ſhe ſpins a clammy *thread*, and weaves it into a tenacious *net*. Expert as any practiſed ſportſman, ſhe always ſpreads it in the moſt opportune places. Senſible that her appearance would create horror, and deter the prey from approaching the ſnare, when watching for ſport, ſhe retires from ſight; but conſtantly keeps within diſtance, ſo as to receive the very firſt intelligence of what paſſes in the toils; and be ready to launch, without a moment's delay, upon the ſtruggling captive. And what is very obſervable, when winter chills the world, and no more inſects ramble amidſt the air, foreſeeing that her labour would be vain, ſhe diſcontinues her work, and abandons her ſtand.

I muſt by no means forget the little monarchy, which inhabits the hive. The *bees* are to ſubſiſt, not as a lawleſs banditti, but as a regular community. 'Tis theirs to earn a decent livelihood by honeſt induſtry; not to glut themſelves with carnage, or enrich themſelves by rapine. For which reaſon, they are actuated by an invariable inclination to ſociety. They poſſeſs the trueſt notions of domeſtic œconomy, and have enacted the wiſeſt laws for political government. —Their indulgent CREATOR has made them a preſent of all neceſſary implements, both for conſtructing their *combs*, and for compoſing their *honey*. They have each a portable veſſel with which they bring home their collected ſweets; and they have all the moſt commodious ſtorehouſes, in which they depoſit their

their delicious wares.—Though made for peace, they know how to uſe the ſword. They can take up arms with the utmoſt reſolution and intrepidity, when arms are requiſite to guard their wealth, or repel their foes. —Without going through a courſe of botany, they can readily diſtinguiſh every plant, which is moſt likely to yield the materials proper for their buſineſs. Without ſerving an apprenticeſhip in the laboratory, they are complete practitioners in the art of ſeparation and refinement. They are aware, without borrowing their information from an almanac, that the vernal gleams, and ſummer ſuns, continue but for a ſeaſon. Mindful of this admonition *, they improve to the utmoſt every ſhining hour; and lay up a ſtock of balmy treaſures, ſufficient to ſupply the whole ſtate, till the bloſſoms open afreſh, and their flowery harveſt returns.

Let the *peacock* boaſt, if he pleaſes, his elegant topknot and lofty mien; his neck adorned with varying dies, and his train beſpangled with a round of ſtars. —Yet let him know, that the deſpiſed *butterfly*, and even the loathed *caterpillar*, diſplay an attire no leſs ſumptuous; and wear ornaments, altogether as genteel, if not quite ſo magnificent.—Does beauty ſit in ſtate on that lordly bird? She ſhines in miniature on the vulgar inſect. Is the maſter of this lower creation ennobled with the *powers of reaſon?* The meaneſt claſſes of ſenſitive exiſtence are endued with the *faculty of inſtinct:* which gives them a ſagacity, that is neither derived from obſervation, nor waits for the finiſhings of experience: which, without a tutor, teaches them all neceſſary ſkill; and enables them, without a pattern, to perform every needful operation: and, what is far more ſurpriſing, never miſleads them, either into erroneous principles, or pernicious

 practices;

* *Venturæque hyemis memores, æſtate laborem*
Experiuntur, et in medium quæſita reponunt. VIRG.

practices; never fails them, in the nicest or most arduous of their undertakings.

Can you have patience to follow me, if I step into a different element, and just visit the *watery world?*—Not one among the innumerable myriads, which swim the boundless ocean, but is watched over by that exalted eye, whose smiles irradiate the heaven of heavens. Not one, but is supported by that almighty hand, which crowns angels and archangels with glory.—The condescending GOD has not only created, but *beautified* them. He has given the most exact proportion to their shape, the gayest colours to their skin, and a polished smoothness to their scales. The eyes of some are surrounded with a scarlet circle; the back of others is diversified with crimson stains. View them, when they glance along the stream, or while they are fresh from their native brine; and the burnished silver is not more bright, the radiant rainbow is scarce more glowing, than their vivid, glistering, glossy hues.

Yet, notwithstanding the finery of their apparel, we are under painful apprehensions for their welfare.—How can the poor creatures live, amidst the suffocating waters?—As they have neither hands nor feet, how can they help themselves, or how escape their enemies?—We are soon freed from our fears by observing, that they all possess the beneficial, as well as ornamental furniture of *fins*. These when expanded, like masts above, and ballast below, poise their floating bodies, and keep them steadily upright.—We cannot forbear congratulating them on the *flexible* play, and *vigorous* activity of their tails; with which they shoot themselves through the paths of the sea, more swiftly than sails and oars can waft the royal yacht.—But we are lost in wonder, at the exquisite contrivance, and delicate formation of their *gills:* by which they are accommodated, even in that dense medium, with the power of breathing, and the benefits of respiration.

A piece of mechaniſm this, indulged to the meaneſt of the fry; yet ſurpaſſing, infinitely ſurpaſſing, in the fineneſs of its ſtructure, and the felicity of its operation, whatever is curious in the works of art, or commodious in the palaces of princes.

Ther. Some perſons, *Aſpaſio*, have the art of giving *dignity* to trivial, and *ſpirit* to jejune topics. I cannot but liſten, with a pleaſed attention, to your diſcourſe, though it deſcends to the loweſt ſcenes, and meaneſt productions of nature.—To make ſuch philoſophical remarks, was uſually *my* province; to add the religious improvement, *yours*. But my thoughts, at preſent, are wholly taken up with the conſideration of my SAVIOUR's righteouſneſs. I can hardly turn my views, or divert my ſpeech, to any other ſubject. All thoſe amiable appearances of the external creation, which I was wont to contemplate with rapture, afford but a languid entertainment to my mind.—Till my intereſt in this divine REDEEMER is aſcertained, the ſpring may bloom; the ſummer ſhine; and autumn ſwell with fruits: but it will be winter, chearleſs, gloomy, deſolate *winter* in my ſoul.

Aſp. You ſay, *Theron*, you attended to my curſory hints. Then your own ſuperior diſcernment could not but perceive, how every part of the exterior world is adjuſted, in the moſt excellent and gracious manner.—Not the *coarſeſt* piece of inactive matter, but bears the impreſs of its MAKER's faſhioning ſkill. —Not a *ſingle* creature, however inſignificant, but exhibits evident demonſtrations of his providential care. —His hand is liberal, profuſely liberal, to all that breathes, and all that has a being.

Let me only aſk;—and to introduce this queſtion with the greater propriety, to give it a more forcible energy on our minds, was the principal deſign of the preceding remarks;—let me aſk, *Does GOD take care for oxen* *? Is he a generous benefactor to the meaneſt animals,

* 1 Cor. ix. 9.

animals, to the loweſt reptiles? Are his munificent regards extended farther ſtill, and vouchſafed even to the moſt worthleſs vegetables? And ſhall they be withheld from *you*, my dear friend, and from *me*?—Not one among all the numberleſs productions, which tread the ground, or ſtand rooted to the ſoil, wants any convenience, that is proper for its reſpective ſtate. And will his heavenly FATHER deny *Theron*, what is ſo neceſſary to his preſent comfort, and his final happineſs? Impoſſible * !

Ther. I wiſh for, but I can hardly hope to partake of, that ſpiritual bleſſing; which always included my whole happineſs, and now ingroſſes my whole concern.

Aſp. Not hope to partake of!—What foundation, what ſhadow of pretence, has this deſponding temper, either in reaſon, or in ſcripture? Is it not evident from the whole book of revelation; is it not apparent, through the whole compaſs of nature, that the almighty LORD, "who governeth the world with "the

* I know not how to forbear tranſcribing a paragraph, from one of our periodical papers; which contains a propoſal for *adapting* natural philoſophy to the capacity of *children*: wiſhing, at the ſame time, that the ingenious author would enlarge his ſketch into a treatiſe; and execute the plan, which he has ſo judiciouſly projected, and of which he has given us ſo delicate a ſpecimen.

After ſome remarks on the ſagacity of birds, their induſtry, and other ſurpriſing properties, he adds;—"Is it for birds, O "LORD, that thou haſt joined together ſo many miracles, "which they have no knowledge of? Is it for men who give "no attention to them? Is it for the curious, who are ſatis-"fied with admiring, without raiſing their thoughts to thee? "Or is it not rather viſible, that thy deſign has been to call "us to thyſelf, by ſuch a ſpectacle? to make us ſenſible of thy "providence and infinite wiſdom; and to fill us with *confidence* "in thy bounty, who watcheſt, with ſo much care and tender-"neſs, over birds, though two of them are ſold but for a "farthing?"

" the palm of his hand *," is remote, infinitely remote from a niggardly disposition? He not only provideth for the wants, but even *satisfieth the desire of every living thing* †.

Consider those stately *poppies*, which are now the principal ornament of the garden. They have no tongue to request the least favour. Yet the ever-gracious MAKER clothes them from his own wardrobe, and decks them with exquisite beauty.—Observe the *young ravens*, which sit carelessly croaking on yonder boughs. Do they cry ‡ for food? It is in hoarse inarticulate accents. Yet the all-supporting GOD overlooks their ignorance; hears meaning in their noise; and supplies their every need from his own spontaneous bounty.—If he accommodates the former, tho' incapable of asking; if he attends to the latter, though insensible of their benefactor; can he *disregard* our pressing wants? will he *reject* our earnest petitions? especially, when we seek such pure and exalted gifts, as it is both his delight and his honour to bestow?

O! my friend, look abroad into universal nature, and look away every disquieting thought.

Ther. Did you inquire what pretence I have for this desponding temper? Alas! I have more than a pretence. I have a reason; a reason too obvious; my great *unworthiness!*

Asp. Pray, where was the worthiness of the stiff-necked *Israelites?* Yet the LORD *bare them, and carried them, all the days of old* ‖.—Where was the worthiness of *Saul* the blasphemer? Yet the blessed *JESUS* made him a chosen vessel, and set him as a signet on his right hand.—You deserve nothing at the hand of GOD our SAVIOUR. Neither did *Joseph*'s brethren deserve any kindness from the viceroy of *Egypt*. Yet he delivered *them* from famine, who sold *him* to slavery. He settled them in the choicest territories, who cast him into the horrible pit. He shewed himself a friend

* Eccles xviii. 3.
† Psal. cxlv. 16.
‡ Psal. cxlvii. 9.
‖ Is. lxii. 9.

friend and a father to those unnatural relations, who were his actual betrayers, and his intentional murderers.—And can you persuade yourself, will you harbour a suspicion, that *CHRIST* is less compassionate than *Joseph?* Shall a frail mortal outvie *EMMANUEL* in beneficence?

Ther. Is not *some* righteousness of our own indispensably required, in order to our participation of the righteousness of *CHRIST?*

Asp. Yes, such a righteousness as the *Samaritan* woman *, and *Zaccheus* the publican possessed; or such as the *Philippian* jailor, and the profligate *Corinthians* might boast †.—*Zaccheus* was a man of infamous character, and chief among the extortioners. The jailor was a barbarous persecutor, and in purpose a self-murderer. Yet our LORD says of the former, *This day*, without injoining any course of previous preparation, *is salvation come to thine house* ‡. St *Paul* directs the latter, without insisting upon any antecedent righteousness, to *believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST;* and assures the poor alarmed sinner, that, in so doing, he should *be saved* ‖.

So that nothing is required, in order to our participation of *CHRIST* and his benefits, but a conviction of *our* need, a sense of *their* worth, and a willingness to receive them in the appointed way; receive them, as the freest of gifts, or as a matter of mere grace. *Come and take freely* §, is our MASTER's language; without staying to acquire any graceful qualities, is his meaning.

Ther. Surely, to come without any holiness, without any *decent* preparative, must be a gross *indignity* to the divine *JESUS.* Whoever presents a petition to any earthly sovereign, will think it absolutely necessary, not to appear in a slovenly dishabille, much less

* John iv. 18. † 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. ‡ Luke xix. 9.
‖ Acts xvi. 31. § Rev. xxii. 17.

leſs in filthy raiment. Does not our LORD himſelf, in the parable of the wedding-garment, inculcate this very point, and caution us againſt a preſumptuous approach?

Aſp. In the parable you mention, *CHRIST* is both the bridegroom, the feaſt, and the wedding-garment *. And *who* are invited to an union with this Bridegroom? to be gueſts at this feaſt? to be arrayed with this wedding-garment?—The meſſengers are ſent, not to the manſion-houſes of the rich, or the palaces of the mighty; but to the *high-ways and hedges:* where Miſery mourns; and Poverty pines; and Baſeneſs hides her head.—*To whom* is their meſſage addreſſed? to the *poor*, the *maimed*, the *halt*, the *blind* †: perſons who have no amiable or recommending endowments, but every *loathſome* and *diſguſtful* property. Yet theſe (mark the paſſage, my dear friend; mark well the encouraging circumſtance) *theſe* are not only not forbidden, but intreated,—importuned,—and by all the arts of perſuaſion, by every weighty or winning motive, *compelled to come in.*—And after all this, ſurely, it cannot be an act of preſumption to accept, but muſt be a breach of duty to refuſe the invitation.

Ther. You take no notice of the man, who was found without a wedding-garment: which is by far the moſt *alarming* incident, and that which gives me no ſmall uneaſineſs.

Aſp. And does my *Theron* take proper notice of the divine declaration? *I have prepared my dinner*, ſays the KING eternal. *All things are ready* ‡. "Whatever "is neceſſary for the juſtification, the holineſs, the "complete ſalvation of ſinners, is provided in the "merit and the grace of my SON. Let them come "therefore, as to a nuptial banquet; and freely en-

"joy

* *Matth* xxii. 11. *Hæc veſtis eſt juſtitiae CHRISTI.* BENGEL. in loc.

† Luke xiv. 21. ‡ Matth. xxii. 4.

" joy my munificence; and feaſt their ſouls with the " royal proviſion."

The man without a wedding-garment, denotes the ſpecious *ſuperficial* profeſſor; who is *called by CHRIST*'s name, but has never *put on CHRIST JESUS* by faith.—Shall I tell you more plainly whom this character repreſents? You yourſelf, my dear *Theron*, was, ſome months ago, in the ſtate of this unhappy creature, when you truſted in yourſelf, and thought highly of your own, thought meanly of your SAVIOUR's righteouſneſs.

I congratulate my friend, on his happy deliverance from ſo dangerous a condition. You and I are now like the returning prodigal. Let us remember, that he came with no recommendation, either of dreſs, of perſon, or of character. None but his nakedneſs, his miſery, and an acknowledgment of vileneſs, which had every aggravating, not one extenuating circumſtance. Yet he was received,—received with inexpreſſible indulgence; and clothed with that firſt, that *beſt*, that divineſt *robe* *, the righteouſneſs of *JESUS CHRIST*.

Let us accuſtom ourſelves to conſider this incomparable robe, under its evangelical character. It is not a matter of bargain, nor the ſubject of ſale, but a deed of gift. *The gift of righteouſneſs*, ſays the apoſtle. And gifts, we all know, are not to be *purchaſed*, but *received*.

Ther. Is nothing then, nothing to be done on our part?—no heavenly-mindedneſs to be exerciſed? no victory over our luſts gained? no fruits of ſanctification produced?

Aſp. Theſe legal apprehenſions! how cloſely they cleave to my *Theron*'s mind! But, I hope, the word of GOD, which pierceth to the dividing aſunder the ſoul and ſpirit, will give the ſevering blow.——And what

* *Luke* xv. 22. Την στολην την πρωτην.

what says that sacred word? It describes the gospel, as a *will* or *testament* *; and all its glorious blessings, as *legacies* bequeathed by the dying *JESUS*.—When your old acquaintance *Charicles* left you a handsome legacy; what did you *do* to establish your title, and make it your own?

Ther. My title was pre-established by my friend's donation. I had nothing to do, but to claim, to accept, and to possess.

Asp. Do the very same in the present case. They who believe, are heirs, undoubted *heirs of the righteousness which is by faith*†.—Sure you cannot suppose, that *CHRIST*'s kindness is less sincere, or that *CHRIST*'s donations are less valid, than those of an earthly testator.

Ther. This illustration hardly reaches the point. I speak not of doing any thing by way of *merit*, but by way of *qualification*.

Asp. If there be any qualification, I think it is our extreme indigence. This indeed it will be proper to have; and this, I presume, you are not without. Other qualification, neither reason prescribes, nor scripture requires.

Reason prescribes no other.—The gifts of the great eternal

* Heb. ix. 16, 17. This notion not only runs through the scriptures, but stands conspicuous even in their title-page.—What are they called? THE OLD and THE NEW TESTAMENT.—What is a testament? An authentic deed, in which estates are transmitted, and legacies bequeathed. In other testaments, some *earthly* possession; in this, the *heavenly* patrimony, even all the riches of grace, and the everlasting inheritance of glory.—Did we consider the scriptures in this light, it would be a most engaging invitation, to search them with assiduity and pleasure. What child is willing to continue ignorant of a deceased parent's last will and testament? Who does not covet to know, what honours, hereditaments, and wealth devolve to his enjoyment, by such an interesting and venerable conveyance?

† Heb. xi. 7.

eternal SOVEREIGN are intended, not to recognize our imaginary worth, but to aggrandize our views of his mercy and grace. To anſwer *ſuch* a deſign, the unworthy and the ſinners are duly qualified; nay, are the *only* qualified perſons.

Scripture requires no other.—The ever-merciful SAVIOUR ſays not, They are unqualified for my merits; they have no valuable or noble acquirements. But this is his tender complaint; *They will not come to me*, juſt as they are; with all their ſins about them; with all their guilt upon them; *that they may have life* *.—Pray, take notice of this text; and you will ſee things placed in a new light, ranged in a new order. Sanctification, heavenly-mindedneſs, and a victory over our luſts, are not ſo much the qualities which he *requires*, as the bleſſings which he will *confer*.

Ther. "The unworthy and ſinners, the *only qualifi-*
"*ed!*" of this expreſſion I cannot but take particular notice.—Then *Judas* ſhould ſtand in the firſt rank of qualified perſons; and the devout centurion, *whoſe prayers and alms had come up as a memorial before GOD*, was thereby unqualified for the favour of heaven.

Aſp. If you obſerved my expreſſion, I ſpoke in the hypothetical manner; made a ſuppoſition, rather than advanced an aſſertion. *If* there be any qualification, this is the only one. But, ſtrictly ſpeaking, there is no ſuch thing. The impulſive, or inclining cauſe of all GOD's favour ſhewn, of all GOD's goodneſs exerciſed, is—from the creature? No, but from *himſelf*, himſelf *alone*. *He has mercy*, not becauſe this or that perſon is amiable, is meet, or qualified, but *becauſe he will have mercy.*—And as for our need of mercy and reconciliation, ariſing from our ſinfulneſs, this can no more conſtitute a *real* qualification for the bleſſings, than an act of rebellion can qualify for the firſt honours of the ſtate.

But this we muſt allow, that ſuch need, ſuch miſery, ſuch

* John v. 40.

ſuch ſinfulneſs, illuſtrate the *freeneſs*, and manifeſt the *riches* of grace. And this we ſhould never forget, that GOD's firſt and leading purpoſe, in all his favourable diſpenſations to fallen man, is, to demonſtrate the ſovereignty, and advance the glory of his grace.—The LORD, promiſing a very extraordinary deliverance to *Iſrael*, ſays, *Not for your ſakes, be it known unto you, do I this* * ſignal act of kindneſs.—What then is the inducement? We find it in the following declaration; *I, even I am HE, that blotteth out your tranſgreſſions for my own ſake* †, and *according to the good pleaſure of my will*.—What is the end of all? It is FOR THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE ‡. A proper motto this, for all the diſplays of divine goodneſs to ſinful men. It has been inſcribed by the hand of truth and inſpiration. Time and eternity, inſtead of eraſing the lines, will only ſtamp them deeper, and open them wider.

Ther. This is ſuch a gift!—To be intereſted in all the merits of *CHRIST!* To have his immaculate righteouſneſs imputed to my ſoul!—So that from henceforth there ſhall be no fear of condemnation, but a comfortable enjoyment of freeſt love, and a delightful expectation of completeſt glory!

Aſp. If this rich donation ſurpaſs your very thoughts, and fill you with grateful aſtoniſhment; it is ſo much the better adapted to diſplay, what the ſcripture very emphatically ſtyles, the *abundant*, the *ſuperabundant*, the *exceeding abundant* ‖ grace of our GOD.—GOD hath

* Ezek. xxxvi. 32.

† *Iſ.* xliii. 25. למעני *For my own ſake.* Which teaches us, that GOD, and nothing in the creature, is the original, entire, ſole cauſe of all grace and every gracious vouchſafement. It is not only *by* him, and *through* him, but *to* him; for the honour of his benign perfections, that we are pardoned, accepted, ſaved.

‡ Eph. i. 6.

‖ Υπερβαλλουσα χαρις. 2 Cor. ix. 14.—Υπερπερισσευοντι η χαρις. Rom. v. 20.—Υπερπλεονασεν η χαρις. 2 Tim. i. 14.

hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. He is a boundless ocean of love; ever flowing, yet absolutely inexhaustible. See! what an innumerable variety of benefits are transmitted from yonder sun, to gladden all the regions of nature! Yet the sun is but a *spark;* its highest splendor, no more than a *shade;* its uninterrupted and most profuse communications of light, a poor diminutive *scantling;* compared with the riches of divine *benignity*.

The servant in the parable, who owed ten thousand talents, craved only some merciful forbearance. Whereas his generous lord remitted the whole sum, and gave him an acquittance in full; *I forgave thee all that debt* *.—You wonder, and very deservedly, at such vast generosity. But what had been your admiration to see the noble master admitting this obnoxious slave to a share in his dignity? what if he had made so worthless a wretch, the chief of his family, and the heir of his estate? This perhaps, you would say, exceeds the bounds of credibility. Yet GOD almighty's stupendous beneficence exceeds all this. He not only spares guilty creatures, but makes them his *children;* makes them *inheritors* of his kingdom; and as an introduction to all, or rather as the crown of all, makes them *partakers* † of his SON.

Ther. The gift is inestimable; of more value than all worlds. It will render me blessed and happy, now and for ever. And may so unworthy a creature look for a blessing, thus superlatively excellent?

Asp. Unworthy?—my dear friend, dwell no longer upon that obsolete topic. The greatest *unworthiness* is no objection in *CHRIST*'s account, when the soul is convinced of sin, and the heart desirous of a SAVIOUR. And as for *worthiness*, this is as much as disavowed by the gospel, as *equivocal* generation ‡ is exploded

* Matth. xviii. 32. † Heb. iii. 14.

‡ The *ancients* imagined, that many vegetables and insects were produced by, I know not what, plastic power in the sun, and

ploded by the discoveries of our improved philosophy. —Nay farther, this notion is diametrically *contrary* to the gospel, and totally *subversive* of the covenant of of grace.

Ther. In what respect?

Asp. Because it would make our own duty and obedience the terms. Whereas the terms were *CHRIST*'s suffering, and *CHRIST*'s obedience. *These* are the hinge on which that great transaction turns, and on which the hope of the world hangs.

Ther. Be more particular, *Aspasio*.

Asp. The first covenant was made with *Adam*, for himself and us. Breaking it, he lost his original righteousness, and became subject to death; was, at once, a *bankrupt* and a *rebel*.—Now you cannot suppose, that the almighty MAJESTY would enter into a fresh covenant with an *insolvent* and *attainted* creature. It pleased therefore, the SECOND PERSON of the adorable TRINITY, to undertake our cause, to become our Surety, and put himself in our stead. *With him* the second covenant was made. He was charged with the performance of the conditions; thereby to obtain pardon and righteousness, grace and glory, for all his people. *I have made a covenant with my CHOSEN* † *ONE*,

and other elements. This is called *equivocal* generation. Whereas the *modern* philosophers maintain, that every individual of this kind derives its being from some parent-vegetable or parent-animal. This is styled *univocal* generation.

* *Psal.* lxxxix. 3. It is generally allowed, that this psalm, in its *sublimest* sense, is referable to *CHRIST*; and, in its *full* extent, is referable *only* unto *CHRIST*. If so, I think, is would be more significant and emphatical, to render [illegible] *my CHOSEN ONE*.—This will furnish out a very clear and cogent argument to prove, that the covenant of grace was made with our *LORD JESUS*. Just such an argument as the apostle uses, to convince the *Galatians*, that the promises of the covenant were made to the same divine PERSON, *Gal.* iii. 16.—From both which premises this important conclusion follows, That justification and every spiritual blessing are the

ONE, is the language of the MOST HIGH. And the terms were (you will permit me to repeat the momentous truth) not your worthineſs or mine, but the incarnation, the obedience, the death of GOD's ever-bleſſed SON.

Ther. Has man then no office aſſigned, no part to act, in the covenant of grace?

Aſp. He has: but it is a part which my friend ſeems very loath to diſcharge. His part is to *accept* the bleſſings, fully purchaſed by the SAVIOUR, and freely preſented to the ſinner. His part is, not to diſhonour the REDEEMER's gracious interpoſition, and infinitely-ſufficient performance, by hankering after any merit of his own. His part (why will you conſtrain me to reiterate in this manner?) is, not to bring money in his hand, with the ten brethren; but, with an empty hand, and like an impoveriſhed *Lazarus*, *to take hold of GOD's covenant* *.

Ther. If this be the nature of the new covenant, I muſt confeſs, I have hitherto been ignorant of the goſpel.

Aſp. And from hence ariſes your preſent diſtreſs; from hence your averſeneſs to receive comfort. You are a philoſopher, *Theron*; and have been accuſtomed to examine nicely the proportion of objects, rather than to weigh them in the balance of the ſanctuary. Here you find all proportion ſwallowed up and loſt. This quite overthrows all your concluſions, drawn from the fitneſs of things. Here *man* is nothing, leſs than nothing, while *grace* is all in all.—And ſhould we not, however unworthy of ourſelves, magnify the grace of our GOD?

Ther. Moſt certainly.

Aſp. How can this be done, but by expecting great and

the *purchaſe* of *CHRIST*'s obedience; are lodged in him as the great *proprietary*; are *communicated* to ſinners only thro' the exerciſe of *faith*, or in a way of believing. See *Zech.* ix. 11.

* Iſ. lvi. 4.

and ſuperlatively-precious bleſſings from his hand?—*Alexander*, you know, had a famous, but indigent philoſopher, in his court. Our adept in ſcience was once particularly ſtraitened in his circumſtances. To whom ſhould he apply, but to his patron, the conqueror of the world? His requeſt was no ſooner made than granted. *Alexander* gives him a commiſſion, to receive of his treaſurer whatever he wanted. He immediately demands, in his ſovereign's name, a hundred talents *.—The treaſurer ſurpriſed at ſo large a demand, refuſes to comply; but waits upon the king, and repreſents the affair; adding withal, how unreaſonable he thought the petition, and how exorbitant the ſum.—*Alexander* hears him with patience: but, as ſoon as he had ended his remonſtrance, replies; "Let the money be inſtantly paid. I am delighted "with this philoſopher's way of thinking. He has "done me a ſingular honour; and ſhewed, by the "largeneſs of his requeſt, what a high idea he has "conceived, both of my ſuperior wealth, and my "royal munificence."

Thus, my dear *Theron*, let us honour, what the inſpired penman ſtyles, *the marvelleus loving-kindneſs of JEHOVAH*. From the King, *whoſe name is the LORD of hoſts*, let us expect,—not barely what correſponds with our low models of generoſity, much leſs what we ſuppoſe proportioned to our fancied deſerts,—but what is ſuitable to the unknown magnificence of his name, and the unbounded benevolence of his heart. Then we ſhall chearfully and aſſuredly truſt, that *CHRIST JESUS* will be *made of GOD to us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption*: that HE, who hath *given* himſelf for us †, will *give* us of his SPIRIT ‡, and will *give* unto us eternal life ‖.

Ther. Yes, upon condition, that we fight the good fight, and finiſh our courſe of duty. *Henceforth*, ſays the apoſtle, after this is done, *there is laid up for me*, and

* About ten thouſand pounds.

† Eph. v. 2. ‡ John iv. 13. ‖ John x. 28.

and for other victorious soldiers, for other faithful labourers, *a crown of righteousness*.

Asp. To such persons the crown will assuredly be vouchsafed. But is it vouchsafed on account of their successful warfare, or persevering obedience? If so, *Israel may vaunt themselves, and say, Mine own hand*, not the REDEEMER's interposition, *hath saved me**.

Not to repeat what has already been alledged, in opposition to this opinion;—not to produce what might farther be urged, from a variety of scriptural testimonies;—I shall only desire you to observe, what the apostle himself adds in this very place: *There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness:* but is this the pay, proportionate and due to his own services? Is it what he claims and demands, on the foot of duty performed?— The very title of the reward implies the contrary. It is *a crown of righteousness*, because purchased by the meritorious and consummate righteousness of *CHRIST*. The action of the Judge declares the contrary: *which the LORD, the righteous Judge, shall* give *me at that day*. It is, you see, an act of favour; the issue of unmerited bounty; what neither saint, nor martyr, nor apostle enjoys, but only by way of gracious donation †.

I would fain have my *Theron* form more honourable apprehensions concerning the mercy and the bounty of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*. He will bestow what you suppose he exacts. He is really a benefactor, where you would represent him as a taskmaster. *The LORD will give grace, as well as glory*. He knows, you

* Judg. vii. 8.

† 2 *Tim.* iv. 8. The word ἀποδώσει, as it stands in the present connection, is, I think, very properly explained by a late pious professor of divinity at *Glasgow*: *Profitetur fiduciam suam de gratuita mercede, quam DEUS gratis promisit omnibus fidelibus, et ut justus judex, juste simul et ex gratia rependet, non ex merito ullo nostro, sed priora dona sua gratuita posterioribus gratuito cumulando.* DICKSONI *Expos. Analyt.*

you have neither ſtrength nor merit, therefore he will ſupply your want of both, from his own unfathomable fulneſs.

Ther. Ah! my *Aſpaſio!* you don't know my ſtate. I have not only no merit, but great guilt *; was, by nature, a child of wrath; have been, by practice, a ſlave of ſin; and, what is worſe, am ſtill corrupt; have ſtill a carnal heart.—And has not ſuch a wretch forfeited all title to the divine favour? Nay, does he not deſerve the vengeance of eternal fire?

Aſp. That we all deſerve this miſery, is beyond diſpute. I am truly glad, that we are ſenſible of our demerit. Here our recovery begins. Now we are to believe, that the *LORD JESUS* has ſatisfied divine juſtice; has paid a glorious price, on purpoſe to obtain for ſuch ill-deſerving, ſuch hell-deſerving creatures, all pardon, all holineſs, and everlaſting happineſs. According to the import of that charming ſcripture, *When we were enemies* (and what is there in an enemy, to beſpeak favour, or deſerve benefits?) *we were reconciled to GOD by the death of his SON* †.

You have *great guilt.* But is this a reaſon why you

* I believe, no one *experienced* in the ſpiritual life will ſuſpect, that *Theron* ſpeaks *out of character.*—Conſcience, when once alarmed, is a ſtubborn and unceremonious thing. It pays no deference to wealth; it never ſtands in awe of grandeur; neither can it be ſoothed by the refinements of education, or the attainments of learning. And we generally find, that a moſt unaccountable propenſity to *ſelf-worthineſs*, ſtrongly poſſeſſes the new-awakened convert. He is perpetually raiſing objections, founded on the want of perſonal merit; notwithſtanding all our remonſtrances, to quiet his fears, and remove his jealouſies. It is truly a hard taſk, for a mind, naturally leavened with legal pride, to come naked and miſerable to *CHRIST*;—to come, diveſted of every recommendation but that of extreme wretchedneſs; and receive, from the hand of unmerited benignity, the free riches of evangelical grace.

† Rom. v. 10.

ſhould be excluded from the bleſſings of the covenant? Contemplate the ſtate of that forlorn and wretched outcaſt, deſcribed in the ſixteenth of *Ezekiel*. An infant *in its blood:* this repreſents a ſinner, who has nothing to excite love, but all that may provoke abhorrence. Yet what ſays the HOLY ONE of *Iſrael? When I ſaw thee*, not waſhed, and purified, and made meet for my acceptance, but *polluted in thy blood* *; loathſome with defilement, and laden with iniquity; then, even then *I ſaid unto thee, Live: I ſpread my ſkirt over thee; and thou becameſt mine*. This is the manner of his proceeding, but barely to one nation, but to all his people; not in one period of time only, but through all generations.

You are *ſtill corrupt;* one that is ſenſible of his corruption, and acknowledges his ſinfulneſs! Then you are the *very perſon*, for whom the SAVIOUR's righteouſneſs is intended; to whom it is promiſed.—You are a governor of the county-hoſpital, *Theron*. You have been induſtrious in promoting, and are active in ſupporting, that excellent inſtitution; where Medicine with her healing ſtores, and Religion with her heavenly hopes, act as joint handmaids to Charity. What are the circumſtances which render any perſons the proper objects for an admiſſion into your infirmary?

Ther. Their poverty, and their diſtemper. Without *poverty*, they would not need; and free from *diſtemper*, they would not prize, the benefit of our modern *Bethesda*.

Aſp. Apply this to the caſe under conſideration. The whole world is in a ſtate of ſpiritual diſorder, *CHRIST* is ſtyled, by the inſpired writer, *the LORD our*

* The words are peculiarly emphatical; not only doubled, but redoubled; to denote, at once, the *ſtrangeneſs* of the fact, yet the *certainty* of the favour. *When I paſſed by thee, and ſaw thee polluted in thine own blood, I ſaid unto thee when thou waſt in thy blood, Live: yea, I ſaid unto thee when thou waſt in thy blood, Live.* Ezek. xvi. 6.

our healer *. The gift of his righteouſneſs, the balm of his blood, and the influences of his SPIRIT, are the ſovereign reſtorative. And ſure it cannot be a fanciful perſuaſion of our health, but a feeling conviction of our diſeaſe, which renders us proper objects of his recovering grace.—*He came, not to call the righteous*, the righteous in their own eyes, *but ſinners* †, ſelf-condemned and ruined ſinners, *to* give them *repentance*, and pardon, and newneſs of life.

Ther. But if any fooliſh and refractory patients have abuſed our beneficence, it is a ſtanding unalterable rule of the houſe, never to admit them a ſecond time, however preſſing their exigencies, or however powerful their recommender. I have, not once only, but through the whole courſe of my life, abuſed the marvellous loving kindneſs of the LORD.

Aſp. And is not the LORD ſuperior to all his creatures, in acts of *pardon*, as well as of *power?* Yes, as thoſe heavens are higher than this proſtrate earth, ſo much more enlarged and extenſive is the divine clemency,—than the wideſt ſphere of human kindneſs, ſhall I ſay? rather than the boldeſt flights of human imagination. Your ſtatutes are inexorable, in caſe of one notorious irregularity committed. *But the free gift* of a REDEEMER's righteouſneſs is vouchſafed, notwithſtanding *many offences unto juſtification* ‡. It is the glory of our almighty RULER, and redounds to the honour of his crucified SON, to paſs over ‖ not a ſingle tranſgreſſion only, but a multitude of provocations; to be altogether as unequalled in mercy, as HE is abſolutely ſupreme in majeſty.

As it is the *groſſeſt pride*, to entertain high notions, of our own accompliſhments, or to expect eternal life on the ſcore of our own obedience; ſo it will be the *greateſt affront* to the grandeur of *CHRIST*'s merits, and the freeneſs of his grace, if we ſuppoſe our crimes too

* Exod. xv. 26. † Matth. ix. 13. Acts v. 31.
‡ Rom. v. 16. ‖ Prov. xix. 11.

too hainous to be forgiven, or our persons too vile to be accepted.

Theron paused.—These considerations seemed to operate; this anodyne to take effect.—Desirous to improve the favourable juncture, and impart the needed consolation, *Aspasio* added:

How often did the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* disregard the warnings, and reject the counsels of our blessed LORD! How justly might HE have sworn in his wrath, "They shall never hear the joyful sound "of my gospel more. The blessings which they have "so wantonly despised, and so wickedly abused, shall "be irrevocably withdrawn."—Instead of passing such a sentence, this is the charge, which, after his resurrection, he gives to his apostles: *Let repentance and remission of sins be preached in my name to all nations*, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM *.—"At *Jeru-* "*salem!* LORD! Have not the men of that ungrate- "ful and barbarous city been deaf to thy tenderest "importunities? Did they not persecute thee unto "condemnation and death? Are not their weapons "still recking, as it were, with thy blood; and their "tongues still shooting out arrows, even bitter words? "by which they would murder thy character, as they "have already crucified thy person."—Yet these wretches (and could any be more inhuman? could any be more unworthy?) are not only not abhorred, but unto them is the message of grace, and the word of salvation sent. Nay, to shew the unparalleled freeness of our REDEEMER's grace, these are *first* upon the heavenly list. The glad tidings of pardon and life, which are to be published through the world, *must begin* (amazing mercy!) MUST BEGIN at *Jerusalem*.

Ther. Thus much I may venture to profess in my own behalf: That I long for this blessing;—I pray for this

* Luke xxiv. 47.

this bleſſing;—but I cannot ſee my title to this comprehenſive and ineſtimable bleſſing, *clear*.

Aſp. I behold it perfectly clear.—Some days ago, a worthy clergyman, who lately came to ſettle in the neighbourhood, did himſelf the honour of making one at your table. After dinner you ſhewed him your library; we took a walk in your garden; and made the agreeable tour of the fiſh-ponds. Then,—with that amiable frankneſs of mien and accent, which is ſo peculiar to my friend, and exceedingly endears all his favours,—you told him, "That he was as welcome to any book in your ſtudy, as if the whole collection was his own: that if, on a viſit from ſome acquaintance of ſuperior rank, he ſhould wiſh to be accommodated with a more delicate entertainment than uſual, the productions of your waters, and of your hot-beds, were entirely at his ſervice: and that his acceptance of your offers, without the leaſt ſhineſs or reſerve, would be the moſt pleaſing compliment he could pay you on the occaſion."

What ſays the PROPRIETOR of all good? *If any man*, however unworthy his perſon, or obnoxious his character, *thirſt;* thirſt for the bleſſings of my evangelical kingdom; *let him come unto ME*, the fountain of theſe living waters, *and drink* his fill *.—You yourſelf acknowledge, that you long for the ſacred privileges of the goſpel. Your heart is awakened into habitual and lively deſires after the ſalvation of *CHRIST*. What is this but, in the ſpiritual ſenſe, to thirſt? To you therefore the promiſe is made; to you the riches of this benign diſpenſation belong.

That clergyman has not the leaſt ſuſpicion of being diſappointed, in caſe he ſhould ſend for a brace of carp from your canal, or a fine melon from your garden.—Why is he ſo confident? Becauſe he has done you any ſignal ſervice? No; but becauſe you have paſſed your word, and made the generous offer.—And why

* John vii. 37.

why should you harbour the least doubt concerning the divine veracity? Why should you call in question your right to these heavenly treasures? since it is founded on a grant altogether as *free*, altogether as *clear*, as your own indulgent concession; and infinitely more *firm* than any human engagement; founded on the fidelity of that sublime BEING, who "remembers his covenant and promise to a thousand generations."

Ther. It is impossible to confute, yet difficult to believe, what you urge.

Asp. What I urge, is not the voice of a few dubious passages, nicely culled from the book of GOD, or forcibly wrested by the interpretation of man. The whole tenor of inspiration runs, with the greatest perspicuity, and the greatest uniformity, in this delightful strain.—Let me, out of a multitude, produce another express from the court of heaven. *Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, even he that hath no money. Come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price* *.—*Wine* and *milk* undoubtedly signify the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons; the communications of sanctifying grace, and the hope of eternal glory. These are nourishing and refreshing to the soul, as milk the richest of foods, and as wine the best of cordials, are to the body. These, you see, are to be obtained, *without money* and *without price;* without any merit of our own; without any plea deduced from ourselves; by poor, undone, perishing bankrupts.—They are to be enjoyed by *every one*, who unfeignedly esteems them, and humbly seeks them. No exception is made; no exclusive clause added. It is not said, Any one that is *worthy*, but every one that *thirsteth*.—To leave no room for any misgiving apprehensions, the kind invitation is repeated, *Buy and eat; buy wine and milk*. The invaluable yet free tender is confirmed

* Is. lv. 1.

confirmed again and again; *He that hath no money: without money; without price.* And both are preſſed upon us with a very remarkable, with the moſt affectionate vehemence; *Come ye; come ye; yea come.*

Had our heavenly BENEFACTOR permitted us to draw up this inſtrument of conveyance, and word it according to our own wiſh; what language could we have contrived, to render either the grant more free, or our claim more ſecure?

Ther. Theſe are chearing truths. They amount to little leſs than a demonſtration. And I am ready to declare, in the language of *Agrippa*, *Almoſt* thou perſuadeſt me to commence a believer.

Aſp. And why, my dear friend, why not *altogether?* Can you diſtruſt the ſincerity of the divine overtures? If the overtures are real, your title is unqueſtionable.—Nay, there is more than an overture. You have an *actual* gift from the almighty MAJESTY. *To us*, ſays the prophet,—including all that wait for the redemption of *CHRIST*, and the conſolation of *Iſrael*,—*a child is born* *. *To us*,—he repeats the precious truth; to declare his exuberant joy †, and denote the abſolute certainty ‡ of the thing,—*a ſon is given;* even GOD's own SON, the ever-bleſſed *JESUS*, to be our PROPITIATION, our SURETY, our complete REDEEMER.

Juſt caſt a look upon yonder neat lodge. Though placed in the centre of a ſpacious field, it ſeems to be contiguous with the extremity of the viſta. The eye, travelling over ſuch a length of ground, has almoſt loſt

* Iſ. ix. 6.

† *Virgil* has copied the prophet's *fine manner.* He repreſents Joy, uttering her ſentiments, in the ſame ſpirited ſtrain, with the ſame reiterated earneſtneſs:

———*Humilemque videmus*
Italiam. Italiam *primus conclamat Achates.*
Italiam *læto ſocii clamore ſalutant.*

‡ See Gen. xli. 32.

loſt the windows, and the decent ornaments of the front. But I ſhall not ſoon loſe the idea of that amiable munificence; which, as I was rambling one pleaſant morning, and accidentally called at the houſe, I learned from its preſent owner.—He was, I find, one of your ſervants; had ſpent ſeveral years in your family; when he ſettled in the world, you beſtowed upon him that commodious box, and a pretty adjacent farm; to poſſeſs, without moleſtation or control, during his life.—Does he not reckon the little eſtate, by virtue of your donation, to be his own? as much his own, for the time preſcribed, as if he had paid an equivalent in money?—Since the LORD JEHOVAH *has given* us his SON, and all his unutterable merits; why ſhould we not, with an aſſurance of faith, receive this incomparable gift? Why ſhould we not confide in it, as firmer than the firmeſt deed; and far more inviolable than any royal patent?—Eſpecially ſince it has been *ſealed* to us in every ſacramental ordinance, and *witneſſed* by every good motion of the HOLY SPIRIT in our hearts.

Ther. My ſervant never affronted my authority. If he had vilified my character, or inſulted my perſon, ſhould I then have been inclined to make the ſame advantageous ſettlement?

Aſp. Herein appears the infinite ſuperiority of the divine bounty. GOD is rich in mercy, not only to the obedient and grateful, but to the unthankful and unworthy. *To the LORD our GOD*, ſays the prophet, *belong mercies and forgiveneſſes;* in meaſure ſuperabundant, and in continuance unwearied; and this, *notwithſtanding we have* offended him, by our manifold failures in duty; nay, have *rebelled* * *againſt him*, by flagrant violations of his law.

In

* *Dan.* ix. 9. The original is מרדנו than which no expreſſion, in the *Hebrew* language, bears a more obnoxious ſignification. It denotes the moſt *audacious* and the moſt *flagitious* impiety.

In sweet concert with this prophetical lesson, sings the transported *Psalmist: Thou, LORD*, in thy sacred humanity, *hast ascended up on high;* ascended, from the low caverns of the tomb, to the highest throne in the highest heavens.—*Thou hast led captivity captive:* hast abolished death, that universal tyrant; and subdued those powers of darkness, which had enslaved the whole world.—Like a glorious *and* triumphant conqueror, thou hast also *received gifts;* not merely for thy own fruition, but to confer on others, by way of honorary and enriching largess.—What are those gifts, *Theron?*

Ther. The gifts of the gospel, I suppose; pardon of sin, the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, and those other privileges of *Christianity*, which constitute the present happiness of mankind, and prepare them for future bliss.

Asp. You rightly judge.—And for whom were those royal, those heavenly donatives received? If you have an

piety. It denotes that *rebellion, which is as the sin of witchcraft; and that stubbornness, which is as the iniquity of idolatry.* Yet, all virulent and execrable as it is, it does not suppress the yearnings of divine pity, nor supersede the exercise of divine forgiveness.—With a word derived from the same root, *Saul*, when exasperated almost to madness, upbraids *Jonathan.* And we know, persons so extremely incensed, never speak in the softest terms; never touch the subject with a feather, but make their tongue like a sharp sword.

May I venture to add, that our translators seem to mistake the proper application of the aforementioned passage? They represent *Saul*'s invective, flying as *wide* of the mark, as it is *overcharged* with malice.—*Son of the perverse rebellious woman!* This might be asserted, without the least impeachment of *Jonathan*'s personal loyalty.—Besides, is it not excessively indecent, as well as absolutely unreasonable, to reflect upon the mother, for the misdemeanors of the son?—Surely, the clause should be rendered, in perfect consistence with the genius of the original; *Thou son of perverse rebellion:* or, more agreeably to the *English* idiom, *Thou perverse rebellious wretch!* 1 Sam. xx. 20.

an inclination to beſtow a ſword ſet with diamonds, a finely-wrought piece of plate, or an exquiſitely-finiſhed picture; what names preſent themſelves to your thoughts? What perſons are the objects of your choice? The *approved* friend, or *diſtinguiſhed* favourite, I make no queſtion.—But for *whom* (let me aſk again, ſince it is a point of the laſt importance) were thoſe heavenly donatives received?

Ther. Let me recollect:—*Thou receivedſt gifts*,—not for fallen angels, but *for men*;—and not for thy friends, but for thy *enemies*;—yea, *for the rebellious* alſo *.—Merciful heaven! What a word is this! and does it come from the GOD of truth?—Gifts! divine gifts! gifts of unſpeakable value, and eternal duration! and theſe to be conferred on enemies, on the rebellious! wretches, who are deſtitute of all gracious qualifications; who deſerve not the leaſt favour; but have reaſon to expect the frowns of indignation, and the ſword of vengeance!

Aſp. Thus it is written, in thoſe ſacred conſtitutions, which are far more ſtedfaſt and unalterable, than the law of the *Medes* and *Perſians*.—Thus it is ſpoken, by the mouth of that almighty BEING, with whom there is no variableneſs, nor the leaſt ſhadow of turning.—Let us not, my dear friend, by unreaſonable unbelief, fruſtrate all theſe promiſes, and reject *our own* mercies. Let us not, by an evil heart of unbelief, make GOD a liar; and make ourſelves, of all creatures, moſt miſerable.

But ſee!—The clouds, which hung their agreeable ſables, to damp the ardour, and abate the glare of day, are departing. The ſun has been colouring their fleecy ſkirts, and ſpreading over the floating ſcreen a variety of interchangeable hues. Now he begins to edge them with gold, and ſhine them into ſilver. A ſure indication, that (like the *glittering*, but *tranſitory* toys,

* Pſalm lxviii. 18.

toys, which they repreſent) they will ſoon be ſwept from the horizon, and ſeen no more.—The bright orb, while we are ſpeaking, burſts the veil; and, from a voluminous pomp of parting clouds, pours a flood of ſplendor over all the face of nature.—We ſhall quickly perceive this open ſituation too hot to conſiſt with pleaſure; and muſt be obliged to ſeek for ſhelter, in the ſhady apartments of the houſe.

Will you admit me *Theron*, into thoſe ſhady apartments?

Ther. Admit you, *Aſpaſio!*—I am ſurpriſed at your queſtion. I thought you had known me better; and I am ſorry, it ſhould be needful to aſſure you, that my houſe is as much your own, as it is mine. The more freely you command it, the more highly you will oblige me.

Aſp. May I believe you, *Theron?* Do you ſpeak from your heart; or muſt I conclude, that you plauſibly profeſs, what you have no intention to perform?—Would you be pleaſed, if I ſhould obſtinately perſiſt in theſe diſhonourable ſuſpicions, notwithſtanding all your friendly proteſtations?

Ther. My dear *Aſpaſio*, I ſee your deſign. I ſee, and am aſhamed; aſhamed to think, that I ſhould fancy myſelf more punctual in my profeſſions, than GOD is true to his word.—*LORD, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!*

DIALOGUE XVI.

OUR friends had agreed upon a viſit to *Philenor*. They rode through a fine, open, fruitful country; which was covered with crops of ripened corn, and occupied by ſeveral parties of ruſtics gathering in the copious *harveſt*.

The *rye*, white and hoary as it were with age, waved

ved its bearded billows, and gave a dry huſky ruſtle before the breeze.—The *wheat*, laden with plenty, and beautifully brown, hung the heavy head; and invited, by its bending poſture, the reaper's hand. Plats of *barley*, and acres of *oats*, ſtood whitening in the ſun. Upright, and perfectly even, as though the gardener's ſhears had clipped them at the top, they gratified the ſpectator's eye, and gladdened the farmer's heart.—*Beans*, partly clad in native green, partly transformed and tawny with the parching ray, were preparing the laſt employ for the crooked weapon.—Some of the grain lay flat, in regular rows, on the new-made ſtubble. Some was erected, in graceful ſhocks, along the briſtly ridges. Some, conveyed homewards on the loaded waggon, nodded over the groaning axle.

The villages ſeemed to be empty, and all their inhabitants poured into the plains. Here were perſons of each ſex, and of every age.—The luſty *youths*, ſtooping to their work, plied the ſickle; or ſwept, with their ſithes, the falling ranks.—The ſprightly *females* followed, binding the handfuls into ſheaves, or piling the ſwarths into haſty cocks.—Diſperſed up and down were the *children* of the needy, gleaning the ſcattered ears, and picking their ſcanty harveſt.—Nor were the *old* people abſent; but crawling into the ſun, or ſitting on a ſhady eminence, they beheld the toils,—the pleaſing toils they once ſuſtained.

This is the moſt joyful period of the country-man's life; the long expected crown of all his labours. For this he broke the ſtubborn glebe, and manured the impoveriſhed ſoil. For this he bore the ſultry beams of ſummer, and ſhrunk not from the pinching blaſts of winter. For this he toiled away the year, in a round of ceaſeleſs but willing activity; knowing, that * *the huſbandman*

* 2 *Tim.* ii. 6. *Beza* thinks, that in ſettling the conſtruction of this verſe, the adverb πρῶτον ſhould be connected with the participle

husbandman most labour, before he partakes of the fruits. —And will not the blessed hope of everlasting life; will not the bright expectation of consummate bliss, animate us with an equally-chearful resolution, both to resist the temptations, and discharge the duties of our present state?

Short seemed the way, and quick passed the time, as they travelled through such scenes of rural abundance, and rural delight.—Before they were aware, the horses stopt at *Philenor*'s seat: where they found, to their no small disappointment, that the master was gone abroad. They alighted however, and took a walk in the *gardens*.

The gardens, at proper intervals, and in well-chosen situation, were interspersed with pieces of *statuary*. At the turn of a corner, you are—not shocked with a naked gladiator, or a beastly *Priapus*,—but agreeably surprised with the image of *Tully*. He is just risen from his seat, and upon the point of addressing himself to some important oration. A reverential awe appears in his countenance; such as silently acknowledges, that he is going to plead before the rulers of the world. Sedate, at the same time, and collected in himself, he seems conscious of superior eloquence, and emboldened by the justice of his cause. His thoughtful aspect, and gracefully-expanded arm, speak to the eye, before the tongue has uttered a syllable.

You enter an alley, lined on either side with a verdant fan; and having no variety of objects to diversify the intermediate space, your view is conducted to a

participle κεκτυλα. If so, the translation exhibited above, may bid fair for acceptance; and one of the most celebrated historians, may have the honour of commenting on the greatest of the apostles; *Næ illi falsi sunt, qui diversissimas res expectant ignaviæ voluptatem, et præmia virtutis.* SALLUST. *i. e.* They are, beyond all dispute, most egregiously mistaken, who hope to unite those incompatible things, the pleasures of indolence, and the rewards of industry.

a magnificent building at the end. As you walk along, contemplating the masterly performance in architecture, an unexpected opening diverts your attention; and presents you with some striking imitation of virtuous or heroic life.—Not the *Macedonian* madman; nor *Sweden*'s royal knight-errant; nor *Cæsar*, infamously renowned for his slaughtered millions; but the truly-gallant *Czar*. A drawn sword in his hand, and a commanding majestic sternness on his brow. The weapon is held in the most menacing posture; and many a spectator has been observed to start back, with apprehensions of fear. It is that gloriously-severe attitude, in which the grateful citizens of *Narva* beheld him, and in which all posterity will admire him, when he turned upon his own victorious, but ungovernable troops, and threatened to drench the dagger in their hearts, if they did not immediately desist from rapine * and slaughter; immediately allow quarter to their vanquished foes.

Under a circular dome, supported by pillars of the *Doric* order, and in a spot where several walks centre, stands—not the *Venus a Medicis*; corrupting, while it captivates the world,—but a *Spartan* mother. Her habit decent and graceful; somewhat like the *Juno Matrona* of the *Romans*, as she is finely depictured in Mr *Spence*'s *Polymetis*. Her air stately and resolved; expressive of dignity, yet mingled with softness. She holds a shield; is in the act of delivering it to her son; a youth setting out for the army, and going to hazard his life, in the defence of his country. She is supposed to add that spirited and magnanimous exhortation, which

* "As soon as the soldiers were masters of the town, "(*Narva*,) they fell to plunder, and gave themselves up to the "most enormous barbarities. The *Czar* ran from place to "place, to put a stop to the disorder and massacre. He was "even obliged to kill with his own hand several *Muscovites*, "who did not hearken to his orders."

VOLTAIRE's *hist. Charl.* XII.

which is engraven on the protuberance of the buckler, —ἢ τὰν, ἢ ἐπὶ τᾶς.— *Bring it back, my ſon, as thy trophy; or be brought back upon it, as thy bier.*

I am particularly pleaſed, ſaid *Theron*, with the contrivance of this laſt ornament. It is regulated by one of the moſt refined rules of art; not to laviſh away all the beauty at a ſingle view, but to make a ſkilful reſerve for ſome future occaſion.—The dome and the columns afford pleaſure, when beheld at a conſiderable diſtance. The fine animated figure in the midſt diſplays its graces, on a nearer approach. By which means, the attention is kept awake, and the entertainment continues new.

But what I principally admire, is the *ſpirit* or *ſtyle* of the decorations in general. They put me in mind of a very juſt remark, which Mr *Pope* has ſomewhere made. It is, if I remember right, to this effect.—"A man not only ſhews his taſte, but his virtue, in "the choice of his ornaments. A proper piece of "hiſtory, repreſented in painting on a rich man's "walls, (*or exhibited in imagery amidſt his gardens,*) "is very often a better leſſon, than any he could teach "by his converſation. In this ſenſe, the ſtones may "be ſaid to ſpeak, when men cannot, or will not."—All but the comparative or ſatirical part of the obſervation, I would apply to the proſpect before us, and its worthy owner.

Aſp. Philenor's gardens are, I think, more chaſte and delicate in their ornaments, than a certain *collegiate church.* In the latter place, we might reaſonably expect the ſtricteſt adherence to purity, if we ſhould not meet with the ſymbols of piety and incitements to religion.—What then would be the reflections of a judicious obſerver, if, in ſuch a ſolemn and venerable edifice, he ſhould ſee a huge brawny fellow ſtuck up againſt the wall, with his poſteriors half bare, his whole body more than half naked, and in an attitude

titude none of the moſt decent *.—Excuſe me, *Theron*. I confeſs myſelf aſhamed even to rehearſe the deſcription. How then can the ſpectacle itſelf become the houſe of divine worſhip?

Ther. But perhaps this ſame brawny fellow may repreſent a *Heathen* demigod; one of the *idols* worſhipped by antiquity; the tutelary deity of valour.

Aſp. And will this juſtify the practice? Does not this add profaneneſs to immodeſty? Are we *Chriſtians* to thank *Hercules* for the valour of our warriors, and make our acknowledgments to *Pallas* for the conduct of our generals? Shall we *Chriſtians* behold with admiration, or recognize as our benefactors, what the apoſtle has ſtigmatized under the character of *devils* †?

If

* Referring to the monument, lately erected for MAJOR GENERAL FLEMING in *Weſtminſter Abbey*. Where, under the General's buſt, are placed *Hercules* and *Pallas*. *Hercules* with his club and lion's ſkin, in the manner related above, *Pallas*, with a mirror and a ſerpent at her ſide.—The reader may ſee a picture and an explanation of this monument, in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for *Auguſt* 1754.

As this church has been the burial place of the moſt illuſtrious perſonages, for many centuries; as it is the place, where *all* our kings receive their crowns, and *many* of them depoſit their aſhes; as it is ſingularly eminent for its antiquities and monuments; there is a large reſort both of natives and foreigners, to view its grand and awful curioſities. Whatever, therefore, is erected in a place ſo circumſtanced and ſo diſtinguiſhed, ſhould, I apprehend, not only diſplay an air of *elegance* in the execution, but include a *beauty of holineſs* in the deſign: becauſe nothing can lay claim to the το καλον, which is not poſſeſſed of the το πρεπον. Nor can any performances, thus ſituated, be pronounced truly graceful, but ſuch only as correſpond with the character, and ſubſerve the deſign of the ſacred edifice. It was thought, by a very able critic and a very candid writer, that *mere impropriety* of taſte, in ornamenting one of the monuments, called for his cenſure. Surely then a violation of *decency*, and an approach to *Paganiſm*, call more loudly for public animadverſion, and proper reformation. See *Spect.* Vol. I. No. 26.

† 1 Cor. x. 20.

If HE, who overthrew the tables of the money-changers, had taken a walk in these famous cloysters, I am apt to suspect, he would have paid no very agreeable compliment to this fine piece of statuary *Take these things hence*, would probably have been his command; and *make not the precincts of your temple a chamber of* Pagan *imagery*, his rebuke *.—Neither is it at all unlikely, that the image itself, notwithstanding its inimitable workmanship, might have shared the fate of its kinsman *Dagon;*

When the captive ark
Maim'd his brute image, head and hands lopp'd off
In his own temple, on the groundsell edge
When he fell flat, and sham'd his worshippers †.

Ther. But how should the artist represent the great achievements and the shining qualities of his hero, if you will not allow him to make use of these *significant* emblems?

Asp. I question, whether they are so very significant. The mirror seems to characterize a fop, rather than a soldier. It leads us to think of a soft *Narcissus*, admiring himself; rather than a sagacious general, planning the operations of the campaign.—Besides, is sacred literature so destitute of proper emblems, that we must borrow the decorations of our churches and the trophies of our conquerors, from the dreams of superstition or the delusions of idolatry? How just and expressive are those emblematical representations, exhibited in *Ezekiel*'s vision! where activity and speed are signified, by *hands* in conjunction with *wings;* and the deep, the complicated, yet ever-harmonious schemes of Providence, by *a wheel in the middle of a wheel*. With what propriety and force are the noblest endowments pictured, in the revelations of St *John*, and their grand machinery! Superior wisdom and benevolence of heart, are described by the face of *a man;*

* John ii. 16. † Milton. b. I. 458.

ſtrength of mind and intrepidity of ſpirit, by the viſage of *a lion;* calmneſs of temper and indefatigable application, by the features of *an ox;* a penetrating diſcernment, and an expeditious habit of acting, by the form of *a flying eagle* *.

Theſe hieroglyphics are graceful, are pertinent, and ſuch as every ſpectator will underſtand. Whereas the devices of our new monumental encomium are, I preſume, to the unlearned hardly intelligible; to the ſerious, little better than profane; and to every beholder, indelicate if not immodeſt.—*Philenor*, I imagine, would bluſh to admit them into his walks or avenues. And I am ſorrow to find them received into the moſt ancient †, moſt renowned, and moſt frequented church in the kingdom.

Talking in this manner, they come to a curious grove, formed on that uncommon plan, propoſed by Mr *Addiſon*, in one of his *Spectators*.—It conſiſted wholly of *evergreens*. *Firs*, clad in verdant ſilver, pointed their reſinous leaves, and ſhot aloft their towering cones. *Laurels*, arrayed in gloſſy green, ſpread their ample foliage, and threw abroad their rambling boughs.—*Bay-trees* were expanded into a fan, that no weather could tarniſh; or rounded into a column, that knew not how to moulder. While the *lauriſtinus* ran out into a beautiful irregularity of ſhape; and compacted her reddening gems, in order to unfold her whitening bloom.—In one place lay a dale, gently ſinking, and coated with the *chamomile*'s natural frieze; which never changes its colour, never loſes its gloſs. Near

* Rev. iv. 7.

† Some antiquarians trace back the origin of this church, even to the reign of *Lucius;* which is more than the ſpace of 1500 years. Others ſuppoſe, that *Sebert*, King of the *Eaſt-Saxons*, about the year of our LORD 605, built the firſt religious ſtructure on this ſpot. All agree, that it was re-edified and enlarged by *Edward* the *Confeſſor;* and that the preſent ſtately and magnificent fabric was founded by *Henry* III.

Near it, and ſcooped, you would imagine, from the ſame hollow, aroſe a mount, ſoftly ſwelling, and ſhagged with *furze;* gay with perennial verdure, and generally decked with golden bloſſoms —Here you are led through a ſerpentine walk, and hedges of *box;* and find, perhaps, a ſolitary pyramid or a capacious urn, each compoſed of unfading *yew*. There you look thro' a ſtrait alley, fenced on either ſide, and arched over head, with mantling *philirea;* and ſee, at the extremity, an obeliſk ſheathed in *ivy*, and ornamented with its ſable cluſters, as with wreaths of living ſculpture.—Scattered up and down, were ſeveral ſorts of *holly;* ſome ſtriped with white; ſome ſpotted with yellow; ſome preparing to brighten and beautify the ſcene, with berries of glowing ſcarlet.

The heads of the trees, ariſing one above another, in a gradual ſlope, from the diminutive mazerean to the lofty cypreſs; the ſeveral ſhadings of their green attire, greatly diverſified, and judiciouſly intermixed; afford, eſpecially in the winter-ſeaſon, a moſt *enlivened* and *lovely* proſpect.—As the ſunſhine is, by the frequenters of this grove, uſually more coveted than the ſhade; it is ſo diſpoſed, as to admit, in one part or another, every gleam of fine weather, which exhilarates the winter.

Aſp. There muſt be ſomething unſpeakably pleaſing in a plantation, which appears lively and fruitful when all its neighbours of the woodland race are barren, bleak, or dead. But how much more chearing and delightful muſt it be, when *decrepit* age, or bodily infirmities, have impaired the vigour, and laid waſte the gratifications of our youthful prime, to find a ſolid *undecaying* pleaſure in the favour of GOD, and the hope of glory!—Now indeed the feathered tribes reſort to the more flowing umbrage of the poplar and the aſh. But, amidſt *December*'s cold, you ſhall obſerve them forſaking the *leafleſs* woods, and flocking to this friendly receptacle; hopping acroſs the ſunny walks,

walks, or sheltering themselves, in the wet and stormy day, under these *trusty* boughs. So, the many thoughtless creatures, who turn their back upon religion, amidst the soft and soothing caresses of prosperity, will want, extremely want, its *sovereign supports*, under the sharp and distressing assaults of adversity, sickness, and death.—This collection, it is true, may not equal the groves of annual verdure, in floridity of dress; but it far exceeds them, in the duration of its ornaments. Ere long, yonder shewy branches will be stript of their holiday cloaths: whereas *these* will retain their honours, when *those* are all rags, or nakedness. Thus will it be with every refuge for our poor, imperfect, sinful souls; excepting only the righteousness of our *LORD JESUS CHRIST*. Every thing else will *fade as a leaf* *. This, my *Theron*, and this alone is an *evergreen;* always free for our acceptance, and always effectual to save.

Ther. An evergreen it is. But, like the ruddy and inviting fruits, which hang on the uppermost boughs of these lofty trees in the orchard, it seems to be quite out of my reach.

Asp. Are you sensible, that you *need* the immaculate and perfect righteousness of our SAVIOUR?

Ther. Was *Jonah* sensible, how much he needed the cooling shelter of his gourd, when the sun smote fiercely upon his temples, and all the fervours of the fiery east were glowing around him?—So is your *Theron* sensible, that, without a far better righteousness than his own, he must inevitably be condemned by the sentence of the law, and cannot possibly stand before the high and holy GOD.

Asp. Remember then, what our LORD says to such persons; *Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest* †. How *gracious* is the invitation? Come unto ME, the Father of compassions, and the Giver of every good gift.—How extensive

* Is. lxiv. 6. † Matth. xi. 28.

ſive as well as gracious! All that are *weary* †, toiling in a fruitleſs purſuit of happineſs, and ſpending your labour for that which ſatisfieth not. All that are *heavy laden* †, oppreſſed with the ſervitude of ſin, or bowed down under a load of miſery.—Theſe, *all* theſe are called; and *you*, my friend, in the number.—They have not a ticket, a bond, or ſome inferior pledge, to aſcertain their ſucceſs; but they have a promiſe from faithfulneſs and truth itſelf. *I will give you reſt*, ſays the Strength of Iſrael; whoſe will is fate, and his word the baſis of the univerſe.—And if *CHRIST* will give you reſt, he will waſh you in that blood which atones, and inveſt you with that righteouſneſs which juſtifies; ſince nothing ſhort of theſe mercies can afford any ſatisfaction to the guilty conſcience, or *true* ſatisfaction to the reſtleſs ſoul.—Permit me to aſk farther, Do you earneſtly *deſire* this righteouſneſs?

Ther. Will yonder *hirelings*, when fatigued with the heat and burden of a long, laborious, ſultry day, deſire the ſhades of the evening, and the repoſe of the night?—I can truly, on this occaſion, adopt the words of the prophet; *The deſire of my ſoul is to thy name*, bleſſed JESUS, *and to the remembrance* of thy righteouſneſs. The very mention of this ſpotleſs righteouſneſs is muſic to my ears. Every freſh, tho' diſtant diſcovery of it, gleams pleaſure upon my mind. And that would be a welcome day, a day greatly to be diſtinguiſhed, which ſhould bring it *near* to my view, and *home* to my ſoul.

Aſp. Say not then, my dear friend, that *CHRIST*, and the bleſſings of his purchaſe, are beyond your reach. They are now, even now at your door. You need not argue anxiouſly and deſpondingly, *Who ſhall aſcend into heaven, to bring down CHRIST from above?* or, *who ſhall deſcend into the deep, to bring up CHRIST from beneath* ‡? There is no ſuch impoſſibility,

* Κοπιωντες † Πεφορτισμενοι. ‡ Rom. x. 6, 7.

bility, no such difficulty in the thing. *CHRIST* and his righteousness, *CHRIST* and his salvation, are brought nigh in the word of promise. And *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the LORD JESUS*, as dying on the cross for thy redemption; *if thou shalt believe in thy heart, that GOD hath raised him from the dead* for thy justification, *thou shalt be saved* *. In so doing, thou shalt receive remission of sin, and power to withstand its temptations.

Have you never, in your travels, been overtaken by the dark and tempestuous night? When chilled with the cold, and almost drowned in the rain, you arrived at the house of some valued friend, was you not *willing* to gain admittance?

Ther. Willing! I was desirous, I was almost impatient; I thought every moment an hour, till the hospitable door opened; till I exchanged the dismal gloom and the driving storm, for the chearful light and the amiable company within.

Asp. The adored EMMANUEL professes himself equally willing to come unto you. *Behold!* says the SAVIOUR of the world, *I stand at the door, and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the* DOOR, *I will come in unto him, and will sup with him, and he with ME* †.—Like one exposed to all the inclemencies of the air, whose *head is filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night* ‡, he is not only willing, but *desirous* to enter.—*He stands at the door*, with great long-suffering and perseverance; till all obstacles are removed, or rather till that one grand obstacle is taken out of the way, unbelief.—*He knocks*, by the preaching of his word, and the promise of his gospel; like one who solicits admission, and will take no denial.—Hear then his soliciting voice, and *he will sup with you;* will make his abode with you, will manifest his glories in you, and communicate his grace to you. Believe his promising word, and *you shall sup with him;* this

* Rom. x. 9. † Rev. iii. 20. ‡ Cant. v. 2.

this will be refreshing to your distressed soul, as the most sumptuous banquet to the famished stomach and craving appetite.

Ther. I cannot open my heart.

Asp. *CHRIST* has the key of *David*. *He openeth, and none can shut; he shutteth, and none can open* *.—HE is able to make all grace, not only to exist in you, but *abound* towards you †.—And, what is still more encouraging, he is professedly the *author* and *finisher* of our faith ‡. Since he has claimed this character to himself, since he has undertaken to execute this office, why should we harbour the least distrust? Will HE not fulfil his own office, and act agreeably to his own character? Be not, my dear *Theron*, be not faithless, but believing.

Ther. This I believe,—That I am a lost sinner; under the curse of the law, and liable to the wrath of GOD; that there is no relief for my distress, but in *CHRIST* and his transcendent merits. HE, and HE *alone*, is able to save me from my guilt, and all its dismal train of miseries. HE is a SAVIOUR fully proportioned to my wants; exactly suited to my several necessities.—I believe, and am persuaded, that, if I was interested in the divine *JESUS*, my soul should live.

Asp. Be persuaded likewise, that there is no *clogging* qualification, no worth to be possessed, no duty to be performed, in order to your full participation of *CHRIST* and his riches. Only believe, and they are all your own. *CHRIST dwelleth in our hearts*,—how? by legal works, and laborious prerequisites? No; but *by faith* ‖. *He that believeth on the SON, hath*—a chimerical? far from it; a real and a substantial happiness; even *everlasting life* §.

Ther. Ah! my *Aspasio!* I cannot believe. I feel my impotency. My mind is, as you formerly hinted, like the withered arm.

Asp.

* Rev. iii. 7. † 2 Cor. ix. 8. ‡ Heb. xii. 2.
‖ Eph. iii. 17. § John iii. 36.

Asp. It is no small advantage, *Theron*, to be convinced of our inability in this respect. This is, if not the beginning of faith, the sign of its approach; and shews it to be, if not in the soul, yet at the very door.—Fear not, my friend. He who bids you stretch out, will strengthen the withered arm. He first makes us sensible of our weakness, and then *fulfills all the good pleasure of his will, and the work of faith with power* *.

Can you doubt of his willingness? Then go to mount *Calvary*. *There* listen to *the sounding of his bowels, and of his mercies towards you*†. Has not every drop of blood a tongue? Cannot you read a language in each streaming wound, and hear a voice in every dying pang?—Do they not all speak his infinite love even to wretched sinners? Do they not all address you with that tender remonstrance, *O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt*‡? Nay, do they not all declare, with an energy superior to the force of words, that he will deny you no manner of thing that is good?

Who gave his blood, what gift will he with-hold!

Ther. I am ashamed to recollect, what mistaken notions I once entertained concerning the *easiness* of believing; as tho' it were to be performed, like the act of rising from our seat, or stepping into a coach, by our own strength, and at our own time. What a stranger was I then to the blindness of my understanding, and the hardness of my heart; to my bondage under belief, and averseness to the way of salvation *by grace through faith!*

Asp. Since you are sensible of your impotence, beware of the *contrary* extreme. Because you cannot, by your own strength, exercise faith, let not this occasion a tame resignation of yourself to infidelity. You must endeavour, diligently endeavour, to believe; and wait, and pray, for the divine SPIRIT. Though it is his office to testify of *CHRIST*, *and bring*

* 2 Thess. i. 11. † Is. lxiii. 15. ‡ Matth. xiv. 31.

bring near the REDEEMER's righteousness *; yet his influences are not to supersede, but to encourage our own efforts.—*Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;* here is our duty. *For it is GOD that worketh in you both to will and to do* †; here is our encouragement. And O! What a glorious encouragement, to have the arm of Omnipotence stretched out for our support and our succour!

Ther. How, or in what manner, does the divine SPIRIT work faith in the heart of a sinner? You wonder, perhaps, that I ask such a question. But my apprehensions are strangely dull, and my views very dim, with regard to spiritual things. If in this respect I have any sight, it is like his, who *saw men as trees walking;* saw these several objects, but so obscurely, so confusedly, that he could not distinguish one from the other, only by the circumstance of motion.

Asp. The most enlightened minds see only in part; and all have reason to make the blind beggar's supplication their own request; *LORD, that I may receive my sight!*—The operation of the Holy SPIRIT in producing faith, is thus described by a master in *Israel:* "The divine SPIRIT brings *CHRIST* and his "righteousness nigh unto us in the promise of the "gospel; clearing at the same time our right and warrant to intermeddle with all, without fear of vitious "intromission; encouraging and enabling to a measure of confident application, and taking home all "to ourselves, freely, without money, and without "price."

You was once, *Theron*, a zealous advocate for good works. Now you seem to have abandoned your clients. Remember, my dear friend, what our *LORD JESUS CHRIST* says, ‡ *This is the work of GOD*, of all works most acceptable and most honourable to the

* Is. xlvi. 1. † Phil. ii. 12, 13. ‡ John vi. 29.

the divine MAJESTY, *that you believe on him whom he hath ſent.*

Ther. The true belief, according to your notion, *Aſpaſio*, is ſo refined and exalted a virtue, that I very much queſtion, whether I ſhall ever be able to attain it.

Aſp. If you are unable to attain it, is the LORD unable to give it? *Our ſufficiency* for this and every good work, is not in ourſelves, but in GOD.—And to him difficulties are eaſy. Before him mountains are a plain.—You will pleaſe to remember, that ſinners are ſaid to *believe*, not through their own ability, but through the power of *grace*. And you will permit me to aſk, how you became acquainted with *my* notion of faith?

Ther. I am not ſo inattentive a reader of your letters, as to forget your definition of this momentous article. *Faith*, you ſay, is a real perſuaſion *, that "the bleſſed *JESUS* has ſhed his blood *for me*, and "fulfilled all righteouſneſs in *my ſtead:* that, through "this great atonement and glorious obedience, he "has purchaſed even for *my* ſinful ſoul, reconciliation "with GOD, ſanctifying grace, and all ſpiritual "bleſſings †."

Aſp.

* *Budæus* and *Stephens* derive the original word from πειθομαι, he is perſuaded: and, I think, very properly; for whatever we believe, of that we have a real perſuaſion.—The latter moſt accurate and maſterly critic gives this interpretation of πιστις. *Perſuaſio certa, quam in nobis efficit Spiritus Sanctus, de ſalute in Chriſto promiſſa, quam ſibi quiſque credendo applicat.* To corroborate which expoſition, he adds; *Hac etiam in ſignificatione nomen fidei a theologis Latinus receptum fuit.*

† See *Letter* X. Here is, it muſt be acknowledged, a total omiſſion of all *preparatory* or rather *impulſive* diſpoſitions; ſuch as conviction of ſin, and hungering after ſalvation.—Here is likewiſe a total ſilence concerning all cauſes, *inſtrumental* or *efficient*, ſuch as the power of the divine WORD, and the agency of the divine SPIRIT.—No mention is made of the *fruits* or *concomitants;* ſuch as love to *CHRIST*, love of the brethren,

Asp. I am obliged to you, *Theron*, for the honour you do my letter; and I hope, you will pay an equal regard to the determination of our church. You once apprehended, that my attachment to the church of *England* was unsettled and wavering. Judge now, who has most thoroughly imbibed her doctrines, and is most invariably tenacious of her true interests.—In the first part of the homily concerning the sacrament, we have this definition of faith; "It is a be-"lief, not only that the death of *CHRIST* is avail-"able for the remission of sins, and reconciliation with "GOD, but also that he made a full and sufficient "sacrifice *for thee*, a perfect cleansing *for thy sins* *."

My notion of faith, you see, is evidently the voice of the establishment; and I think it gives us a *clear intelligible* sense, suited to the most common acceptation of the word; such as would naturally arise in the mind of a stranger, who, without any bias on his judgment, should inquire into the purport of our religion, or consider the language of our Bible.

Ther. How suited to the most *common acceptation* of the word?

Asp. When you sent a message to your tenant,—who, in his last sickness, expressed so much uneasiness on account of his numerous family, and embarrassed circumstances,—assuring him, that you had cancelled the bond, and forgiven his debt; when you told the poor woman,—whose husband fell from the loaded waggon, and broke both his legs,—that you would order a surgeon to attend him, and would continue his

brethren, or purity of heart.—Nothing is exhibited to view, but the form and essence of faith; or that particular act, which *characterizes* and *constitutes* real faith; which distinguishes it from the hypocritical pretension, and the historical notion.—This simple view is given, that the mind may fix upon the grand point, and not be embarrassed with a multiplicity of ideas.

* Answerable to this, was the doctrine of the *primitive church*; Η πιστις ιδιοποιειται τον Θεον. CHRYSOST.

his weekly pay: *how* did they regard, *how* receive your promised kindness? *So* let us credit the gracious declarations of our GOD; *so* accept his faithful promise; and then we shall answer the import of the word,—then we shall truly *believe*.

Ther. Where is there, in scripture, any thing parallel or similar to these instances?

Asp. Have you never read the words of *Micah; Who is a GOD like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression* *? Here is the gracious declaration.—*He will turn again; he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities* †. Here is the faithful promise.—And why, my friend, why should we pay less credit to the ever-living JEHOVAH, than to a man "whose breath is in his nos-"trils?" Is there treachery with the HOLY ONE of *Israel?* Does the LORD make, and then violate his promise? "Ask now of the days that are past, ask "from the one side of heaven unto the other, whe-"ther such a thing hath ever been?"

Ther. GOD has never violated his promise, when it was expressly made, and particularly applied. But, in this circumstance, there is a wide difference between the case of your friend, and the case of his poor people. I *named* the object of my compassion in one of the instances, and made a *personal* application in the other. Neither of which is done in the scriptures.

Asp. Tho' we are not particularly named, yet we are very exactly described, by our *family*, our *inclination*, our *practice*.—What says eternal Wisdom, when she makes a tender of her inestimable blessings? *To you, O men*, not to fallen angels, *I call; and my voice is*, not to this man or that man exclusively, but *to the sons of men* indefinitely ‡.—What says the holy apostle, when he publishes the counsels of heaven? *This is a faithful*

* Mic. vii. 18. † Mic. vii. 19. ‡ Prov. viii. 4.

faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save—the upright? the unblameable? Was this the case, our hopes would be covered with a cloud; or rather, totally and finally eclipsed. But see! they are clear as the light, and conspicuous as the noon-day. For he came (chearing, charming word!) he came to save *sinners* *.

Consonant to all which, is the declaration of another sacred envoy. *He*, the PRINCE of peace, the MONARCH of the universe, *suffered*—for whom? They, in whose behalf this matchless ransom was paid, must have an undeniable right to look upon redemption as their own. And blessed, for ever blessed be GOD, it is most peremptorily said, he suffered *for the unjust* †

That no part of our character might be omitted, and no sort of our misery pass unrelieved, it is farther declared, *When we were without strength, CHRIST died for the ungodly* ‡. When we were ungodly, and considered only as ungodly creatures; neither possessed of any thing amiable, nor having the least ability to acquire it; nay, when we were chargeable with horrid guilt, and incapable of expiating a single offence; then, even then *CHRIST* died, and for such abominable wretches he died.—Are we not of the *human* family? Are we not *unjust* ‖ towards our fellow-creatures, and *ungodly* towards our great CREATOR? Are we not, in all relations and in every respect, *sinners?* If we are (and, upon these questions, incredulity itself will scarcely demur,) let us not frowardly reject, rather let us thankfully receive those spiritual treasures, which, by virtue of the aforecited conveyance, belong to *such* people; which, by several other clauses

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † 1 Pet. iii. 18. ‡ Rom. v. 6.

‖ *He* is unjust towards his neighbour, who neglects to love his neighbour as *himself*. And if this is the standard, who has not fallen short?

clauſes in the will and teſtament of our crucified LORD, evidently devolve to *ſuch* perſons.

Ther. Is it poſſible, *Aſpaſio!* Can we be warranted and encouraged to receive theſe treaſures, in a capacity and under a denomination, which I ſhould think more likely to exclude us, diſinherit us, and overthrow all our pretenſions?

Aſp. This may ſeem ſtrange, but it is true. All the bleſſings of the goſpel proceed upon a ſuppoſition of ſinfulneſs. *CHRIST* is made *wiſdom* unto his people; but what occaſion for the acceſſion of wiſdom, unleſs it be in the caſe of ignorance and folly? *CHRIST* is made *righteouſneſs;* but who can ſtand in need of a juſtifying righteouſneſs, if they are not in themſelves unprofitable and guilty? *CHRIST* is made *ſanctification;* and does not this imply a ſtate of corruption to be remedied, a body of ſin to be deſtroyed? *CHRIST* is made *redemption;* and from what are perſons redeemed, but from chains and bondage, from miſery and ruin, from all manner of evil?

It is alſo a moſt precious and invaluable truth; ſuch as I would hold faſt, and never, never let go. When I ſearch for my own endowments, I find nothing that I dare venture to plead; being in my beſt moments, and amidſt my choiceſt duties, a ſinner. As this is, at all times, my undoubted character, I have at all times an undoubted warrant to ſay, The uncreated WISDOM *calleth me;* the bleſſed *JESUS* came *to ſave me*; the great MESSIAH ſuffered death *for me*.

Let me illuſtrate the point.—*Romulus*, you know, the founder of the *Roman* empire, was a poor prince; had but a handful of ſubjects, and very ſcanty territories. What expedient could he deviſe, to enlarge the boundaries of the one, and augment the number of the other? He iſſued a proclamation, addreſſed to outlaws and criminals; all that were involved in debt, or obnoxious to puniſhment; promiſing, that as many as would ſettle under his dominion, ſhould be

be secured from prosecution, and vested with considerable privileges.—We will suppose a person in those distressed circumstances. Upon hearing the welcome invitation, he hangs down his head, and, with a dejected air, cries, "I am a *debtor*, I am a *criminal*, and "therefore unworthy of the royal protection." What answer should be made to such a dispirited complainer? Make the same to yourself, whenever you are inclined to renew the present objections.—Remembering, that the infinite and eternal SOVEREIGN, to display the magnificence of his majesty, and manifest the riches of his goodness, has commissioned his ambassadors to publish in every nation under heaven, —"That all unhappy sinners, who are *oppressed* by "the devil, and liable to damnation, may come to "*CHRIST*, and rely on *CHRIST*; may, in this "manner, obtain pardon, righteousness, and all the "privileges of children."

Ther. At this rate, the *vilest miscreants* have as clear, nay have the very same warrant to believe in *CHRIST*, and receive his salvation, as the highest saints.

Asp. The very same. In this respect there is no difference. All have sinned, and must sue for spiritual blessings, not as deserving, but as *guilty* creatures; must receive them, not as the recompense of their own worth, but as the issues of infinite mercy.—The vilest miscreants are blinded by the devil, and enslaved to their lusts. Therefore they see no beauty in a SAVIOUR, that they should desire him. Whereas, when the divine SPIRIT opens their eyes, and inclines their hearts, they discover and make use of just the same right to *CHRIST* and his merit, as the highest saints: A right founded, not on their awakened desires, not on any thing in themselves, but purely, solely, entirely on the free grant of a SAVIOUR.

Should you ask the highest saints, On what their hopes are grounded? This, or something to this effect, would

would be their reply :—" On the free exhibition of " *CHRIST* and his salvation, recorded in the word " of truth. There we find it written, *To you*, though " Gentiles and idolaters, *is preached the remission of* " *sins* *:—*The promise is to you*, even to you, *whose* " *wicked hands have crucified and slain the* LORD *of* " *life; and* not to you only, but *to all that are afar* " *off, even as many as the* LORD *our* GOD, by the " message of his everlasting gospel, *shall call* †.—We " remember, *Theron*, though you seem to have for- " gotten, the wretched outcast, *polluted* in its blood, " yet accepted by the HOLY ONE of *Israel*. We " remember the heavenly gifts, received by the tri- " umphant REDEEMER, for enemies, and for " the *rebellious*. Nor can we easily forget the pro- " mise of forgiveness which was made, and the bless- " ing of forgiveness which was vouchsafed, even to " the *murderers* of the LORD of glory ‡."

Ther. This is a pleasing supposition. But it would be more satisfactory, if you should produce any of the saints speaking in this manner.

Asp. *Isaiah*, you will allow, was a saint of no inferior rank. Yet he breathes the spirit I am describing, and acts the part I am vindicating. Turn to that epitome of the gospel, his *fifty-third* chapter. There you may observe him claiming a share in the greatest of all privileges, salvation thro' the blood of *CHRIST*. How does he advance and maintain his claim? Not in the capacity of a *sanctified*, but under the character of a *sinful*.

* Acts xiii. 38.

† *Acts* ii. 39. *Call*—in the same manner, as he called those to whom *Peter* spake: which evidently means, not the inward efficacious call, wrought by the SPIRIT; but the outward call, delivered in the word. Otherwise, we must suppose every individual person in this promiscuous assembly, to be savingly changed; which will hardly be credited by those, who remember, that the congregation consisted of mockers, murderers, and sinners.

‡ Referring to *Dialogue* XV.

a *sinful* person. These are his words; *The LORD hath laid on him*, on his son *CHRIST JESUS*, *the iniquity of us all* *. Of me, and of my brethren in piety, does he mean? No; but of me, and of my fellow-transgressors. This is evidently implied in the clause I have quoted. In the preceding part of the verse, the prophet explains himself, and leaves no room for hesitation. *All we, like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own ways;* yet *our* transgressions, *our* iniquities, the GOD of all mercy has transferred from us, and charged upon our REDEEMER.—As the vilest miscreants are indispensably obliged to confess the former, they have a free and full right to profess, to assert, and to believe the latter.

At this you may probably wonder; at this we ought all to wonder; this is that amazingly-rich grace, which will be the wonder of saints and angels through a boundless eternity.—Yet, though we wonder, let us not murmur. Let not the elder brother repine, because the young prodigal enters at the same door, and is admitted to the same table with himself.

To this testimony of the saints, shall I add the decision of their King? *GOD so loved the world*, even the fallen, the wicked, the apostate world, *that*, in the fulness of time, *he gave his only begotten SON* †, to bring in a perfect righteousness, and obtain eternal redemption. And he still gives him, with all his saving benefits, in the promise of the gospel.

Ther. Does this general gift warrant a sinner to make a particular application of all to himself?

Asp. It warrants, it demands, and in other instances obtains, a particular application. When *Jonah*, in pursuance of the divine command, *cried and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown;* here was no particular mention of man, woman, or child. Neither the king, nor the nobles, nor the commons were

* Is. liii. 6. † John iii. 16.

ſpecified. Much leſs was each and every inhabitant threatened by name. Nevertheleſs, this general denunciation alarmed them all; was influential on them all. Inſomuch that *the people of Nineveh believed GOD, and proclaimed a faſt, and put on ſackcloth, from the greateſt of them even to the leaſt* *.—*They believed;* hence we learn the true nature of believing; "GOD "ſpeaks to *me;* and what he ſpeaks, he will perform;" is its genuine profeſſion. Hence we likewiſe diſcover, *who* they are which ought in this manner to apply the general word; *All, from the leaſt even unto the greateſt, believed.*

Ther. The caſe is not parallel, *Aſpaſio.* This was a denunciation of vengeance, not a promiſe of grace.

Aſp. And can you ſuppoſe, that GOD is more liberal of vengeance, than he is communicative of grace? Vengeance is his ſtrange work, but in mercy and loving-kindneſs he delighteth.—Are we bound to believe and apply his dreadful threatenings? not allowed to believe and apply his precious promiſes? Surely, the LORD's ways are not ſo unequal.—When the law ſays, *Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things* †; ſhould not every hearer take this to himſelf, and ſubmit to the ſentence of juſt condemnation? When the goſpel ſays, *HE came to ſave that which is loſt* ‡; ſhould not every hearer take this alſo to himſelf, and embrace the tender of free ſalvation?

However, if you diſlike my inſtance, I will give you another; which is not of the vindictive, but of the beneficent kind:—When the *manna* made its firſt appearance in the wilderneſs; when the *Iſraelites* knew, neither what it was, nor for whom intended; both theſe particulars were explained by *Moſes: This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat* ‖. No mention is made of any individual perſon. Yet the whole congregation

* Jonah iii. 5. † Gal. iii. 10. ‡ Matth. xviii. 11.
‖ Exod. xvi. 15.

gregation looked upon this as an undoubted permiſſion, both for themſelves and their children, to gather, to fetch home, and to uſe the miraculous food.—And here, *Theron*, here lies the principal difference between the vile miſcreant, and the exalted ſaint; not that the one was originally better than the other; not that the one has a clearer grant of CHRIST than the other; but the latter has gathered the heavenly manna, and uſes it to his unſpeakable advantage. Whereas it lies round about the tents of the former; and whoever will, may take, may eat, and his ſoul ſhall live.

Ther. GOD gave the *manna* to all the *Iſraelites*, both good and bad. But does he give *CHRIST* with this unlimited freeneſs?

Aſp. Our LORD himſelf, alluding to this very miracle, vouchſafes you an anſwer: *My FATHER giveth you the true bread from heaven* *. My FATHER giveth you his incarnate SON, and his divinely-excellent righteouſneſs. Theſe are bread indeed, bread, which came down from the regions of heaven; and bread which nouriſheth the ſoul for the joys of heaven.—This my FATHER *giveth you;* though not in actual poſſeſſion, yet in right to poſſeſs. This he giveth you, in the free indefinite grant of his word: without which grant, any attempt to poſſeſs, even in the moſt upright of men, would be illegal and preſumptuous: by virtue of which grant, even the poor ſinner has an unqueſtionable warrant to receive and poſſeſs the riches of *CHRIST*.

Ther. Unqueſtionable! is not this expreſſion too peremptory? That ſuch a grant ſhould be made to *believers*, I can eaſily conceive. But is it made to ſinners,—to any ſinners,—to the moſt abandoned ſinners?

Aſp. Yes, *Theron*, to ſinners. And when ſinners receive the grant, then they commence believers.—Was it made to believers only, no man living would inherit the

* John vi. 32.

the bleſſing: becauſe all men are, by the depravity and impotence of their nature, originally concluded under ſin and unbelief.

What ſaid our LORD? My Father giveth *you;* that is, the people who ſtood around, and heard his gracious voice: many of whom were in a carnal ſtate habitually, and even then were in a murmuring wicked frame *.—What ſays his prophet: To *us* a Son is given; not to us, who were antecedently children of the light; but who *walked in darkneſs, and dwelt in the ſhadow of death* †.—What ſaith GOD the LORD? he that created the heavens, and ſtretched them out? *I will give thee*, meaning his beloved SON, *for a covenant;* it is not ſaid, of believers, but *of the people;* it is not ſaid, of new creatures, but *of the Gentiles:* who were the vileſt of all creatures, or, as you have properly ſpoke, the moſt abandoned ſinners.—That we may underſtand more clearly the ſignification of theſe terms, and ſee the true extent of this gift, it is added, I will give thee *to open the blind eyes, and to bring out the priſoners from the priſon* ‡. Miſerable and guilty wretches, blinded by the devil, and enſlaved to their luſts; theſe are the patentees in the heavenly grant. To theſe the great SURETY is given, together with all the benefits of his covenant.

Here then the grant and the gift are mentioned; the perſons for whom they are deſigned, are ſpecified, and expreſsly named. They are ſinners; *blinded* and *enſlaved* ſinners; or, if there be any other more obnoxious ſort, they are all comprehended in this one word, *Gentiles*. Only allow theſe texts to be true; only allow the divine ſpeaker to be ſincere and faithful; then we may boldly affirm, that *any*, that *every* poor ſinner is authoriſed to ſay, "GOD gives me his "SON, to be my covenant ſurety. I take him at "his word. The SURETY and all his merits are "mine."—Divinely-rich bounty! O, let us not refuſe

* John vi. 26, 41. † Iſ. ix. 2, 6. ‡ Iſ. xlii. 6, 7.

fuse what, on this consideration, the unerring SPIRIT calls *our own mercy* *. Let us adore the beneficence of our GOD; let us believe his promising word; and, in this sweet, this easy manner, obtain both present and final salvation.

Ther. Let me recollect:—*CHRIST* is given for the world, the apostate world, to believe on:—*CHRIST* has died, not for the righteous, but for the ungodly:—*CHRIST* came in the flesh to save sinners, even the chief of sinners.—Well, *Aspasio*, if these things are true, (and how can they be otherwise? since they are the express doctrine of scripture,) it is pity, but they were more generally known. For my part, I must confess, they are not only new, but strange to me. Tho' I have read them in the Bible, yet when I come to consider them, and compare them with what passes in my breast, I find they are quite contrary to my usual ways of thinking.

Asp. You remind me of a valuable person, whom I once numbered among my acquaintance, and whose way of thinking was somewhat similar to your own. Will you give me leave to relate his case?

Ther. Most gladly. It will be some kind of consolation to hear, that others have laboured under the same difficulties with myself, and been subject to the same distresses. If I am informed of their *deliverance* from those distresses, it will be like shewing me an opened door for effecting my own escape. If I am likewise acquainted with the *manner* of their deliverance, this will furnish me with a clue to guide my steps.

Asp. This person was roused from a habit of indolence and supineness, into a serious concern for his eternal welfare. Convinced of his depraved nature and aggravated guilt, he had recourse to the scriptures, and to frequent prayer. He attended the ordinances of Christianity, and sought earnestly for an *assured interest*

* Jonah ii. 8.

tereſt in *CHRIST;* but found no ſtedfaſt faith, and taſted very little comfort. At length, he applied to an eminent divine, and laid open the ſtate of his heart. Short, but weighty, was the anſwer he received. "I "perceive, Sir, the cauſe of all your diſtreſs. You "do not, you will not, come to *CHRIST as a ſinner.* "This miſtake ſtands between your ſoul and the joy "of religion. This detains you in the gall of bitter- "neſs; and take heed, O! take heed, leſt it conſign "you over to the bond of iniquity!" This admonition never departed from the gentleman's mind; and it became a happy means of removing the obſtructions to his peace.

Remember this little hiſtory, *Theron;* and may it prove as efficacious for your good, as it is pertinent to your circumſtances! Remember, that the free grant of CHRIST, made in the word of truth, and addreſſed to ſinners of mankind, is the only baſis and ground-work of faith. An apoſtle, after all the labours of his exemplary life, can have no better. And a *Magdalene* or a *Manaſſeh*, as a motive and encouragement for their turning to the LORD, have the very ſame.

But we digreſs from the principal ſubject. Since you diſapprove *my* account of faith, I muſt deſire you to favour me with a deſcription, more correct and unexceptionable. For, as you juſtly obſerved, this is a *very momentous* article.—Is not CHRIST the ſource of all ſpiritual good, and faith the main channel of conveyance? Surely then it ſhould be made and kept as clear as poſſible.—Is not CHRIST the foundation of all true godlineſs, and faith the maſter-arch in this ſacred ſtructure? Surely then it ſhould be raiſed and turned with the utmoſt care.

Ther. Palæmon's account is this—*Faith*, he ſays, is a firm perſuaſion, that JESUS CHRIST has ſhed his blood, and fulfilled all righteouſneſs; has ſuſtained the

the punishment due to sin; and obtained full reconciliation with GOD: that all this grace, and each of these benefits, are free, perfectly free; for you, for me, for others. In consequence of this persuasion, the sinner flies to CHRIST, comes to CHRIST, and trusts in CHRIST for his own salvation.

Asp. I have the highest regard for *Palæmon*'s judgment; and I cannot but think my opinion is confirmed even by his.—The act of *flying* to CHRIST, is an appropriating act. It implies an intention to get out of danger; it implies a discovery of CHRIST as the appointed safety; and consists in making use of him as such. How can this be done, but by a persuasion that he *is mine?* that his sufferings were in *my* stead, and that his death is my safeguard?—What is meant by *coming* to CHRIST, we may learn from *Jeremiah. Behold! we come unto thee, for thou art the LORD our GOD* *. Coming, you see, includes a real persuasion, that the LORD is *our GOD*. While we are wholly destitute of this persuasion, we stand at a distance, and our souls are afar off. We are never brought nigh; we never come in the prophet's sense; till we are taught to say, each one for himself, *Thou art the LORD my GOD.*—The act of *trusting* in CHRIST is much of the same nature. It presupposes, that CHRIST is the trustee of the covenant of grace; it proceeds upon a conviction of his faithfulness in executing the office; and it is a solemn surrender or giving up the whole affair of our salvation into his hand; giving it up, not in uncertainty of success, (this would be mistrusting, rather than trusting,) but with a certainty, in some measure suitable to the fidelity and ability of HIM, with whom we have to do.

If you still are doubtful, whether any such persuasion is implied in *trusting*, let us chuse a referee. Let us carry our controversy to the king of *Israel*. Inquire

* Jer. iii. 22.

quire of *David*, why he truſts in the LORD, and what he means by truſting? To both theſe inquiries he anſwers diſtinctly and fully: "*The LORD is my* "*high tower, my ſhield, and he in whom I truſt.** He "*is*—he is *my* ſhield;—of this I am perſuaded, and "*therefore* I truſt in him: or this I believe, and, in *ſo* "*doing*, I truſt on him."

Ther. There is an air of *aſſurance* in your repreſentation of faith; which ſounds harſh in my ear, and appears preſumptuous in my eye. It is as if people pretended to know their ſeat in heaven, before the judgment-day.

Aſp. The *Papiſts*, I own, take great offence at this expreſſion, and utterly explode this doctrine. But they are no infallible guides for us to follow; neither are they very inviting patterns for us to imitate. You and I, *Theron*, cannot be offended at the expreſſion or the doctrine, if we recollect what we have been taught in the firſt ſtage of life, and what is profeſſed in the laſt ſcene of mortality. We are taught, even from our infancy, that the ſacrament of the LORD's ſupper, is not only a ſign of ſpiritual grace, but a pledge to *aſſure* us thereof. At the interment of the dead, we profeſs our *ſure* and certain hope of a reſurrection to eternal life. That this is always applied, with due propriety, in our burial-ſervice, I will not venture to aſſert; that it ſufficiently countenances my ſentiments, none will undertake to deny. And if this countenances, the apoſtle authoriſes them, when he addreſſes us with this very remarkable exhortation; *Having therefore, brethren, boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood of JESUS, let us draw near with a true heart in* full aſſurance *of faith*; with a firm perſuaſion of acceptance; with a certain expectation of ſucceſs.

However, if you diſlike the word aſſurance, we will change it for the more ſoftened, and more modeſtly-ſounding term, *appropriation*.

Ther.

* Pſal. cxliv. 2.

Ther. You change it for a more ſoftened, not for a more intelligible term. I muſt deſire to know, what you mean by the word *appropriation*.

Aſp. To appropriate, in the theological ſenſe, is to take home the grace of GOD, which lies in the common indefinite grant of the goſpel. Is CHRIST the treaſure hid in the field? To appropriate this treaſure, is to receive and uſe it as our own portion. Is CHRIST the balm of *Gilead*, full of ſaving health? To appropriate this balm, is to take and apply it for the recovery of our own ſouls. And without ſuch an appropriation, how can we either be enriched by the former, or healed by the latter.

Let me farther explain my meaning, and exemplify the poſition, by conſidering CHRIST in his ſeveral offices.—CHRIST, as a Prieſt, is made to guilty creatures righteouſneſs. When we appropriate the grace of our great HIGH PRIEST, this is the language of our hearts, *In the LORD have I righteouſneſs* *.—CHRIST, as a Prophet, is made to ignorant creatures wiſdom. When we appropriate the benefits of our unerring PROPHET, this is the perſuaſion of our ſouls, *Tho' I ſit in darkneſs, the LORD will be a light unto me* †.—CHRIST, as a King, is made unto depraved creatures ſanctification. When we appropriate the munificence of our almighty KING, this is our comfortable truſt, *The LORD will deliver me from every evil work* ‡.

This is what I mean by appropriation.—That ſomething of this kind is included in the eſſence of faith, is the ſentiment I would maintain.—Which ſentiment might be confirmed, if ſuch confirmation were demanded, by a multitude of the moſt illuſtrious witneſſes; witneſſes ſo illuſtrious, that they were a bleſſing to the world, and an honour to human nature; ſo numerous, that, without giving an abſtract of their

* Iſ. xlv. 24. † Mic. vii. 8.

‡ 2 Tim. iv. 18.

teſtimonies, it might ſeem tedious only to recite their names *.

Ther. I will diſpenſe with your recital of their names, only let me have a ſpecimen of their teſtimonies.

Aſp. Firſt, then, let me preſent you with Dr *Owen;* than whom *England* has produced few writers, either more judicious or more devout. "Faith," he tells us in his *catechiſm*, "is a gracious reſting upon "the free promiſes of GOD in JESUS CHRIST "for mercy, with a *firm perſuaſion* of heart, that "GOD *is* a reconciled Father to *us* in the SON of "his love."—Next let me introduce the learned and juſtly-

* If the reader ſhould inquire after their names, he will find *ſome* of them enumerated in the following catalogue. *Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, Beza, Bullinger, Bucer, Knox, Craig, Melvil, Bruce, Davidſan, Forbes*, &c.—*Urſinus, Zanchius, Junius, Piſcator, Rollick, Daneus, Wendelinus, Chamierus, Sharpius, Bodius, Pareus, Altingius, Triglandii, (Giſbertus & Jacobus,) Arnoldus, Marceſius;* the four profeſſors at *Leyden, Wallæus, Rivetus, Polyander, Thyſius; Wollebius, Heidegerus, Eſſenius, Turrettinus*, &c.—Many eminent *Britiſh* divines. Biſhop *Babington, Davenant, Hall;* Mr *Perkins, Pemble, Willet, Gouge, Rogers, Burgeſs, Owen, Marſhall*, &c.

If we were apparently and demonſtrably in an error, yet, to err with ſuch company, and in the footſteps of ſuch guides, muſt very much tend to mitigate the ſeverity of cenſure. But, I believe, few ſerious perſons will venture to charge error and delu ion upon ſuch a venerable body of Proteſtant divines; ſo eminent for their learning, and ſo exemplary for their holineſs; whoſe labours were ſo remarkably owned by GOD, and whoſe ſentiments, on this particular ſubject, have been adopted by ſo many reformed churches.—The declarations of the *Engliſh* and *Palatine* churches are produced in the dialogue. I have in my hand an exſtract from the confeſſions and ſtandard doctrines of the church—of *Scotland*—of *Ireland*—of *France*—of *Helvetia.* With all which *Aſpaſio* has the happineſs to agree. Only ſome of them are much ſtronger in diſplaying and maintaining the ſpecial *fiducia*, or the appropriating perſuaſion of faith. To quote them, would dignify and ſtrengthen the cauſe. But, to avoid prolixity, I forego this advantage.

juſtly-celebrated *Altingius*, profeſſor of divinity at *Heidelberg*. "Faith," he ſays, "is a knowledge of "the grace of GOD in CHRIST, together with a "fiduciary reliance on it, or an *application* of it to a "man's *own ſelf*."—To theſe let me add the unanimous ſuffrage of the churches of the *Palatinate*. It is aſked, in the twenty-firſt queſtion of their public catechiſm, "What is true faith?" To which this anſwer is returned: "It is not only an aſſent to all the "truths which GOD has revealed in his world; but "it is an *aſſured* truſt, wrought by the HOLY SPI-"RIT in my heart, that remiſſion of ſins, complete "righteouſneſs, and eternal life are given; freely "given, not to others only, but to *myſelf;* and all "this, from the mere mercy of GOD, through the "alone merits of CHRIST."

Theſe teſtimonies are but as the tythe to the whole crop. Yet theſe are more than enough to exempt me from the charge of ſingularity. You will not wonder therefore, if I ſtill abide by the good old *Proteſtant* doctrine, which is eſpouſed by ſo many of the ableſt judges; which was the darling tenet of almoſt all our reformers; which has been ſo ſignally inſtrumental in demoliſhing the ſuperſtitions of Popery; and is ſo evidently conducive to the holineſs and the happineſs of Chriſtians.—Eſpecially, as I apprehend, the determinations of ſcripture, and the experience of ſcriptural ſaints, are all on my ſide.

Ther. You have now brought the cauſe to the proper bar. When a queſtion ſo important is debated, and an intereſt ſo momentous is concerned, I cannot, acquieſce in any authority leſs than divine. I cannot and indeed, I think, we ought not. Nothing ſhould ſatisfy us on ſuch on occaſion, but the word, which is unerring and deciſive; the word, by which we are to ſtand or fall eternally. Whence does it appear, that the determinations of this divine word are on your ſide?

Asp. From the nobleſt deſcription of faith, which language itſelf can form. The writer to the *Hebrews*, having mentioned the life of faith, the perſeverance of faith, and the end or reward of faith, proceeds to a definition of this leading grace. *Now faith is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not ſeen* *.—*The evidence*, exhibiting not a faint ſurmiſe, but a clear demonſtration, both of inviſible bleſſings, and of our right to enjoy them.—*The ſubſtance*, realizing what is promiſed; and giving us, as it were, a poſſeſſion of good things that are remote, a preſent poſſeſſion of good things that are future.

Ther. What are thoſe bleſſings, and theſe good things?

Aſp. I will inform my *Theron;* and in ſuch a manner, from ſuch paſſages, as ſhall farther aſcertain my repreſentation of faith.—What ſays the apoſtle of the Gentiles? *I preached unto you the goſpel* †.—And what is the ſubſtance of this evangelical diſpenſation? *CHRIST died for our ſins* ‡.—That ſo exalted a perſon as the SON of GOD, and LORD of glory, ſhould *die*, is wonderful!—That he ſhould die for *ſins*, the moſt abominable objects, and for ſinners, the moſt deteſtable creatures, is abundantly more wonderful!—That he ſhould die, not for ſins in general, but for *our* ſins in particular, this is inexpreſſibly wonderful, and at the ſame time inexpreſſibly comfortable.—Here we have the goſpel and its capital bleſſing, expreſſed in this propoſition, *CHRIST died for ſins*. Here we have faith and its principal acting, expreſſed in this propoſition, *CHRIST died for our ſins*. Till the former is preached, the doctrine is not goſpel; till the latter is believed, it ſhould ſeem from St *Paul*'s account, the conviction is not faith.

Let me produce another inſtance, extracted, like the preceding, from the rolls of heaven. *This is the record,*

* Heb. xi. 1. † 1 Cor. xv. 1. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 3.

record, that GOD hath given to us eternal life *; not proposed it, on I know not what conditions, but *hath given;* freely and fully, without any reserve, and with a liberality suited to his inconceivable goodness, hath given the richest of all prizes; and not to some only, or to others, but to *us*, even to *us*.

Ther. Us, that is, the apostles and exalted saints.

Asp. Was eternal life given them because they were apostles? No, verily; but because *CHRIST* died for them.—Did *CHRIST* die for them, because they were exalted saints? In no wise; but because they were miserable sinners.—Eternal life was purchased for them, when they were sinners. It was consigned over to them, when they were sinners. And neither the purchase, nor the gift, were founded on their *being* saints, but aimed at *making* them so.

That *CHRIST died for our sins*;—that *GOD hath given to us eternal life*: these are the blessings of which faith is the evidence; these the good things, of which faith is the substance. This is the honey in the evangelical hive; and I am at a loss to conceive, how we can taste the honey, without some appropriation of the good things to ourselves.—This, if I mistake not, is comprehended in all those figurative descriptions of faith, which occur in holy writ.

Ther. Favour me with some of those descriptions. I begin to see a peculiar beauty, and an unequalled richness, in the figures of scripture. Nothing yields me a more refined pleasure, than to investigate and discover the exact sense of those instructive images. It is somewhat like kindling the consecrated incense; which, when rising in a flame, diffused light; when spreading in clouds of fragrance, distributed refreshment.

Asp. Faith is styled, *a looking unto JESUS*. But if we do not look unto *JESUS*, as the propitiation for our sins, what comfort or what benefit can we derive

* 1 John v. 9.

derive from the ſight?—*A receiving of CHRIST.* But can I have any pretence to receive him, or take poſſeſſion of his merits, unleſs I am convinced, that they are intended for me? This is what neither the dictates of conſcience will allow, nor the laws of reaſon authorize.—*A reſting upon CHRIST* *. But how can we reſt on a ſurety, if he has not interpoſed on our behalf? or how confide in a payment, which we believe to be made for others, not for ourſelves?—Surely, *Theron*, when I reſt upon an object, I uſe it as *my* ſupport. When I receive a gift, I take it as *my own* property. And when the *Iſraelites* looked unto the brazen ſerpent, they certainly regarded it as a remedy, each particular perſon for *himſelf*.

Ther. To caſt ourſelves upon CHRIST, as an all-ſufficient SAVIOUR; and rely on him, for our whole ſalvation; is not this real faith? This is what I heard, ſome time ago, from a celebrated pulpit.

Aſp. If you rely on the all-ſufficiency of his *will*, as well as of his power; if you take the comfort and appropriate the benefit reſulting from both; you practiſe the very thing I recommend. This is what was taught from the pulpit of infallibility; and by thoſe firſt of preachers, who ſpake as the HOLY GHOST gave them utterance. Let the convinced ſinner, and the afflicted ſoul, *truſt in the name of the LORD, and ſtay upon his GOD.* Let him not only reverence CHRIST, as the incarnate GOD, and therefore mighty to ſave; but look upon CHRIST as *his* GOD, and therefore willing to ſave. Thus let him

lean

* I find two words in the original, which expreſs the privilege and the duty of *reſting on CHRIST.* דם which implies ſuch a ſtate of acquieſcence, as *ſilences* the clamours of conſcience, and compoſes the perturbation of the ſpirit. מנוחה which ſignifies the refreſhment and *repoſe* of a weary pilgrim, when he arrives at the end of his journey, and is ſettled for life in a ſecure, commodious, plentiful habitation. *Pſal.* xxxvii. 7. *Iſ.* xxviii. 12.

lean upon the ROCK * of ages, without indulging a doubt, concerning his right to make use of it, or the possibility of its failing him.

To *cast ourselves* upon *CHRIST*; *to cast our burden*, or *to cast all our care* † *upon the LORD*; are metaphors, which may receive some elucidation from an incident recorded in the *Acts*. When the mariners and passengers, which sailed with St *Paul*, saw their vessel shattered; saw the waves prevailing; saw no hope of safety from continuing in the ship; they cast themselves ‡ upon the floating planks. They cast themselves upon the planks without any scruple, not questioning their right to make use of them; and they clave to those supporters with a chearful confidence, not doubting but, according to the apostle's promise, they should escape safe to land.—Be this what people mean, when they speak of *venturing* or *casting* themselves upon CHRIST, and I approve the expression, I subscribe the doctrine. It speaks what I wish for my friend, for myself, and for my fellow-sinners.

Let us shift our situation, and view the point in another light. Consider the blessed and glorious object of our faith.—CHRIST is represented by the similitude of bread, heavenly bread for the hungry soul. Faith is characterized by *eating* the food. And can this be done without a personal application?—CHRIST is held forth under the image of living waters, ever running, and always free for the thirsty appetite. But let them run ever so copiously, let them be presented ever so freely, all this will neither quench the thirst, nor refresh the spirits, unless they are *drank*. To do this is the business of faith.—CHRIST is described as a garment, to accommodate destitute, and beautify deformed creatures. Faith is expressed by *putting on* this commodious garment, and wearing this beautiful robe. And can any idea, or any expression, more strongly denote an actual appropriation? *Ther.*

* נשא Is. l. 10. † Επιριψαντες, 1 Pet. v. 7.
‡ Απορριψαντες, Acts xxvii. 43.

Ther. It is evident, that many holy people, in former ages, were not poſſeſſed of aſſurance.—What is the language of *David?* It is all deſpondency. *I am caſt out of the ſight of thine eyes.*—To the ſame melancholy tune is the harp of *Aſaph* ſtrung: *Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promiſe fail for evermore?*—The ſame jealous and diſtruſtful air breathes in the complaint of the church. *The* LORD *hath forſaken me, and my* LORD *hath forgotten me.*—Why then ſhould my *Aſpaſio* ſet up a rule ſtricter and higher than thoſe eminent ſaints attained?

Aſp. You ſhould rather aſk, Why have the beſt judges, and the moſt exemplary Chriſtians, in their ſeveral writings, ſet up this rule? Why have the apoſtles of our LORD, and the SPIRIT of our GOD, ſpeaking in the Bible, ſet up this rule?—To which I might reply, Becauſe it is, of all precepts, the moſt beneficial. Therefore they have not ſo much ſet it up under the notion of a ſtrict rule, as they have ſet it forth under the character of a choice bleſſing.

Your complaint, when put into its proper language, ſeems to run thus; "Why muſt we be obliged to truſt in *CHRIST alone?* Why muſt we be "obliged to *aſſure* ourſelves of ſalvation by HIM?"—Whereas, inſtead of a complaint, it ſhould be matter of exultation, and we ſhould rather expreſs ourſelves in this manner: "Bleſs the LORD, O my "ſoul, that a ſinner, ſuch a vile ſinner, ſhould be allowed to take CHRIST and all his ſalvation as "my own; and thus to aſſure myſelf of pardon, holineſs, and glory."

This bleſſing was certainly enjoyed by the holy men of old; but, like every other ſpecies of felicity in this world, it was enjoyed after an imperfect manner.—They had an aſſured perſuaſion of GOD's preſent favour, and of their own final happineſs. Nevertheleſs, this aſſured perſuaſion was liable to the aſſaults, both

both of outward temptations, and of inward corruption: which might, for a while, impair its vigour, though not destroy its being. As under a transient swoon, the spirits fail, the colour departs, but the vital principle subsists.

You may farther observe, concerning those pious persons, that, when they cease to exercise this confidence of faith, they lament the failure; *I said, This is my infirmity* *.—They chide themselves for it; *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*—They encourage themselves against it; *Hope in GOD* †, it is thy unquestionable privilege.—How could they do this? on what grounds, or from what motive? if they had not a *secret* persuasion, that their ransom was paid, and their GOD reconciled; consequently, that all their doubts were an injury to his fidelity and to his goodness.

Nay, the church even under her darkest apprehensions, still speaks the sentiment, still retains the grace, for which I am pleading. *My LORD*, uttered with her lips, argues an *applicatory* faith in her heart.—So copious and pregnant are the evidences of this precious doctrine! it is confirmed by that very passage, which was produced for its confutation.

Ther. If this be the sentiment of the church in general, is it also the temper of her particular members? Was each of them animated by this firm and lively faith?

Asp. Let these particular persons appear, and answer for themselves.—Hear the declaration of the Psalmist; *Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name* ‡. What is the cause of this holy transport, and devout praise? Is it, because GOD possibly *may*, because HE probably *will?* No; but because HE actually *does* forgive: *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.*—Take notice of *Job*'s belief, and *Job*'s support, amidst his unexampled sufferings. *I know that my REDEEMER liveth;* not only that there is a Redeemer, but that he is, together with all his saving

* Psal. lxxvii. 10. † Psal. xlii. 5. ‡ Psal. ciii. 1, 3.

benefits, *mine:* which, being a truth so sweet and delightful, is expressed a second time; *whom I shall see for myself* *, to my own advantage, and for my own comfort: see him exerting his almighty power and infinite mercy, to rescue my body from the grave, and to deliver my soul from hell.—What was *Habakkuk*'s security, amidst the threatening, the tremendous, the triumphant malice of his own, and his country's enemies? *The LORD GOD is my strength.* He says not, I *wish*, I *pray*, for the divine favour, and the divine succour; but I am persuaded, they both are mine; my inestimable portion, and my inviolable safeguard. *He will make my feet like hind's feet*, that I shall perfectly escape from all danger; *and he will make me walk upon mine high places*, beyond the reach of every evil †.

Ther. Is this the language of believers under the New-testament dispensation?

Asp. Under every dispensation, *Theron.*—They who lived before the law, *were persuaded* ‡ of the promises; had not the least distrust, with regard to the certainty of their performance; nay, they *embraced them* ‖ as their own, they hugged them, as it were, to their very souls.—They who lived under the law could say, *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us* §.—And can you imagine, in the days of the gospel, when our advantages are greater and our light is clearer, that our faith should be weaker, or our hope fainter? St *Peter* makes a profession, which excludes all doubting; *I am a witness of the sufferings of CHRIST, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed* ††. St *Paul* answers in the same heroic strain: *I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor any creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of GOD,*

* Job xix. 25, 27. † Hab. iii. 19. ‡ πεπεισμαι, Heb. xi. 13.
‖ ασπασαμενοι. § Psal. ciii. 12. †† 1 Pet. v. 1.

GOD, which is in CHRIST JESUS my LORD *. With both which, the confession of faith recorded by St *Luke*, is exactly correspondent; *We believe, that, thro' the grace of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, we shall be saved even as they* †.

Ther. Was not this a privilege peculiar to the apostles?

Asp. By no means. All believers are brethren, and have *like precious faith* —Hear how St *Peter* exhorts all his people; *Gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end;* or, as the word should rather be translated, hope perfectly, hope assuredly, *for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of JESUS CHRIST* ‡. Maintain, not a dim, but a bright hope; not a wavering, but a steady expectation, of eternal life; that free, but grand gift, of which the LORD JESUS, at his second coming, shall put you in full possession.—The apostle, writing to his *Hebrew* converts, encourages them all to *hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of hope, firm unto the end* ‖. From whence it is deducible, that a trust amounting to confidence, and the joy which naturally results from such a trust, were the common portion of Christians; possessed, not barely by some few exalted saints, but by the followers of *JESUS* in general.—I might bring many more instances. But why should I multiply proofs? Since the beloved disciple declares, *These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the SON of GOD, that ye may* know *that ye have eternal life.*

Ther. True, *Aspasio.* This coincides with my apprehensions. The scriptures are written,—first, that we may *believe*, and be entitled to eternal life;—next, that

* Rom. viii. 29. † Acts xv. 11.

‡ 1 *Pet.* i. 13. Εις τελος, or μεχρι τελους, signify *to the end.* But τελειως, as far as I can recollect, is never used in this sense, either by sacred or profane writers. It may be rendered *perfecte, integre*, in this connection, *cum firma fiducia*, with a firm affiance. ‖ Heb. iii. 6.

that we may have the *knowledge* of our belief, and a conſciouſneſs of our title. The apoſtle ſuppoſes his correſpondents to poſſeſs the former, yet not to have attained the latter.

Aſp. Is it certain, that he makes ſuch a ſuppoſition? He writes, I imagine, not with a view of leading them to either, but of *confirming* them in both.—He intimates, that the privilege and the comfort ſhould go together. If we believe, that CHRIST is our Surety; we ſhould be perſuaded, that he has paid our debt, and ſatisfied juſtice to the very uttermoſt farthing. If we believe that CHRIST is our bridegroom; we ſhould reſt aſſured, that his righteouſneſs, his inheritance, and his kingdom are ours. And why ſhould we take pains to ſeparate, what GOD's word and the very nature of things have united? Will this turn to our advantage? muſt it not iſſue in our loſs? —Beſides, according to your own interpretation, whoever falls ſhort of this chearing knowledge, falls ſhort of *one* great end for which the ſcriptures were written. He receives not his full reward. He only *gleans*, where he might *reap*; is toſſed on the ocean of uncertainty: whereas *they that have believed*, have gained the port, have dropped their anchor, and *enter into reſt* *.

Ther. Believed! What? that our ſins are laid upon CHRIST? that he was obedient in our ſtead? that all ſpiritual bleſſings are thereby procured for *our*—even for *our* enjoyment?

Aſp. The bleſſings you mention, are evidently the purport of the goſpel. And I know of no other juſtifying faith, but that which relates to the goſpel, and believes its report †. Nor can I think, that any other belief will adminiſter the tranquillity, or produce the reſt, ſpecified by the apoſtle.—But here, I find, lies the core and root of our controverſy. This is the preciſe point to be ſettled; What it is to *believe*. What is

* Heb. iv. 3. † Iſ. liii. 1.

is included in this very important word!—This question might renew our dispute, and cause the past arguments to recur. Whereas, I would gladly get rid of disputation. We have already been too long detained in these disagreeable paths. However, since you have given the occasion, I may just touch upon another text or two. For I would willingly drive this nail to the head; and not leave my friend unconvinced, on a subject of the utmost consequence.

The LORD declares by his prophet, *I, even I am he, that blotteth out thy transgressions*. To believe, is to subscribe this declaration; to subscribe with our hand, and profess from our heart, "LORD, it is done, "as thou hast said."—Faith is, if I may so speak, the echo of the divine voice. It eagerly catches, and punctually reverberates the joyful sound. Does GOD say, *Thou art my people?* Faith replies, *Thou art my GOD* *: not barely desiring, but confidently averring, an interest in his favour. This explanation of faith is given us by a wisdom which cannot be deceived, by a fidelity which cannot deceive.—Once more. Our LORD bears this testimony concerning *Thomas; Thomas, thou hast believed.* Now then, I think we have got an infallible touchstone. Let us examine, what that is which JESUS CHRIST calls *believing*. Whatever it be, it is the determination of truth itself; and should pass for a verdict, from which there lies no appeal, And this, this is the confession of *Thomas, My LORD, and my GOD* †. This, this expresses what our divine MASTER calls *believing*. When, therefore, we confess with our lips, and are persuaded in our hearts, that *JESUS is our LORD*, who bought us with his blood; that *JESUS is our God*, who will exert all his adorable perfections for our good; then we truly believe. We believe, in our SAVIOUR's sense of the word, we have that faith, which *he* allows to be genuine.

Ther.

* Hos. ii. 23. † John xx. 28, 29.

Ther. Is this the *conſtant* language of faith? According to this account, there is no difference between the infant and the adult; between the new-born babe, and the full-grown man in CHRIST. Your ſpiritual children, *Aſpaſio*, muſt be men from their birth; nay, born in all the vigour of manhood. Whereas, the apoſtle makes an evident difference between the *babes*, the *young men*, and the *fathers*; between faith, the aſſurance of faith, and the full aſſurance of faith. If we are told of a patriarch, who was *ſtrong in faith*; we read of ſome *Roman* converts, who were *weak in the faith*; and we hear our LORD ſpeaking to diſciples, who were *fearful and of little faith*.

Aſp. Between faith, and the *full* aſſurance of faith, the apoſtle makes a difference. The one is the moſt exalted pitch, where the other is but an inferior elevation. Yet both are rounds of the ſame ladder.—I don't remember, that the ſacred writer any where diſtinguiſhes between faith and aſſurance. πιστις and πεποιθησις, *faith* and *confidence*, are joined in the epiſtle to the *Epheſians*. It is the opinion of the beſt critics, that the ſenſe of the latter is included in the former. The critic's opinion is confirmed by the apoſtles declaration, *We have acceſs with confidence through faith* *. Could yonder ſun diffuſe warmth thro' the air, if it had no warmth in itſelf? No more could faith produce confidence in the believer, if, in its own nature, it did not contain the ſame.

The caſe of *little faith*, I think, may be explained from our LORD's own expoſtulation; *O thou of little faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?* Here was a faith, not only in CHRIST's power, but alſo in his will. Nay, here was an appropriating faith, by which the apoſtle applied both to himſelf.—"I verily believe, "that my divine MASTER is *able* to preſerve me, "even though I venture to tread upon this tempeſtu-"ous ſea. I am perſuaded likewiſe, that he *will* "uphold

* Eph. iii. 12.

"uphold me, and not suffer his servant to perish in the "hazardous enterprise." Nothing less than this could have produced that hazardous enterprise, or have emboldened him to walk upon the rolling billows.

Do you not discern, in this instance, some degree of personal application, some real assurance of faith? 'Tis true, this faith was violently assaulted by doubts, and greatly enfeebled by fears *. Yet still it was of the applicatory kind. *He can, he will*, were expressive of its nature; though the boisterous winds, and the terrifying appearance of things, almost drowned its voice, or stifled the words in their utterance.

Ther. If you allow no difference between faith and confidence, I am very sure, St *John* puts a difference between *babes*, *young men*, and *fathers*.

Asp. He does, *Theron*. And so would I. Neither can I think of any thing more proper to explain my meaning, or establish my tenet, than your own comparison.—In some fruitful family, you may see one child in leading-strings; another able to walk by itself; a third come home, improved and cultivated, from the school of literature. Observe their speech. One lisps out a few broken sentences; another talks intelligibly, but very incorrectly; the last has learned to express himself with tolerable propriety. Yet each speaks the *same* language, notwithstanding the various degrees of fluency in their utterance, or purity in their diction.—So faith always speaks one and the same uniform

* I must beg of the candid reader, to take particular notice of this limitation; and must intreat the impartial examiner, not to forget this concession. We no where suppose, that a freedom from all fears, or a superiority to all doubts, are included in the nature of faith. We only affirm, that an appropriating persuasion or assurance are necessary to the being of faith. This assurance may be encumbered with doubts, and may conflict with fears. But still it is *assurance*,—*real* assurance,—and *proves* itself to be such, by opposing and struggling with the contrary principle.

uniform language. Whether she lisps or stammers; whether she whispers in faint accents, or raises her voice in a more manly tone: this is still the unvaried import of her speech; *GOD, even our own GOD, will give us his blessing.*—Can you forget, how St *John* addresses even his little children? *I write unto you, little children, because your sins* ARE FORGIVEN *.

Ther. Will not this account discourage some, and offend others, who are not arrived at such an exalted pitch?

Asp. I would not offend the meanest, nor discourage the weakest of my REDEEMER's servants.—As for *offence*, that cannot be given, and ought not to be taken, when all we advance is strictly conformable to the unerring oracles. Whereas, to qualify and attenuate the scriptural descriptions of faith, in complaisance to our own experience;—to make the unhappy fluctuations and unworthy suspicions, which possess the breasts of some particular Christians,—to make them the rule of explaining, or the measure of enforcing so capital a duty; this, sure, would be an offence to GOD, an injury to his word, and detrimental to the welfare of souls.

With regard to *discouragement*, I cannot conceive, how this should ensue, from informing the poor sinner, that he has a right to apply CHRIST, and all CHRIST's merits to himself; or from exhorting the poor sinner to do this, without any hesitation, and with a resolute dependance. In this case, to *doubt* is to be discouraged; as much as you want certainty, so much you want consolation. The proper way to comfort these distressed people, is, not to allow but to dissipate their doubts; to blow away those dead ashes, that the smothered embers may shine and glow.

Were we to inquire after the cause of that disquietude and despondency which are so common among *modern* professors, I am inclined to suspect, we should find

* 1 John ii. 12.

find it lying hid in their wrong apprehenſions both of CHRIST, and of faith.—They look upon CHRIST, as a rigorous and forbidding monarch, who inſiſts upon ſome hard terms and high qualifications. Whereas, his heart and his arms are ever open: his heart as open, as infinite love can ſet it; his arms as open, as infinite merit can make them.—They look upon faith, as containing a poſſibility only, or at moſt a probability of ſalvation through his name. It is with them a kind of *peradventure;* a ſituation of mind, fluctuating and pendulous. "Perhaps I may ſucceed, and be eter-"nally bleſſed. Perhaps I may be rejected, and eter-"nally ruined." Such a ſtate of ſuſpenſe, in an affair of everlaſting conſequence, cannot but create uneaſineſs and anxiety.

This uneaſineſs and anxiety ſeem to have been little known in the earlier and better days of the church. And why? Becauſe Chriſtians were then expoſed to the rage of perſecution? Becauſe they were placed nearer the time of CHRIST's ſojourning on earth? I rather think, becauſe they were taught this particular and comfortable application of CHRIST and his righteouſneſs. They exerciſed a confident affiance on JESUS, as *their own* REDEEMER; and were ſhewn a more direct way to obtain this aſſurance, than merely to ſearch after their own renewed qualities.

Ther. Surely, *Aſpaſio*, in this particular you differ, not from me only, but from the generality of the *orthodox*.

Aſp. I am ſorry to find myſelf under a neceſſity of differing from any worthy perſons, much more of diſagreeing with the generality. This I can ſafely aver, that it is not from an affectation of novelty, or any fondneſs for diſputing, but from a diſintereſted regard to the truth of the goſpel. I ſhould be glad to have the concurrence of all the ſerious, and all the pious. But I dare not purchaſe their approbation, I dare not attempt a coalition of ſentiments, by diminiſhing the

boundleſs riches of grace, or reſtricting the abſolute freeneſs of ſalvation by CHRIST.

You are pleaſed to remind me of the *orthodox*. Pray, my dear friend, what is the ſtandard of orthodoxy?—Is it the word of revelation? This ſpeaks once, yea twice, nay ſome hundreds of times in our favour.—Is it the doctrine of our reformers from Popery? With theſe we jar not, but exactly harmonize.—Is it to be taken from the old confeſſions of faith, and the catechiſms of Proteſtant churches? To theſe we appeal, and have the ſanction of their authority. Has the *modern* way of treating and ſtating this momentous ſubject ſo much to alledge for its ſupport?

Let me farther aſk,—Are we better than our fathers? Is Chriſtianity in a thriving condition, or practical religion on the advancing hand? The reverſe, the melancholy reverſe is undeniably true.—When our writers enforced, and our preachers urged, what I am defending, profeſſors were alive, and animated with the power of godlineſs. Whereas now we ſeem to be degenerated into the mere form; we *have a name to live, but are* languid, liſtleſs, and if not *dead* *, yet ready to die.—It behoves us therefore to conſider, whether the declenſion, the decays, the unfruitfulneſs, ſo juſtly lamented in the preſent age, be not owing to the abſence of this appropriating belief, or this aſſured perſuaſion.

A ſweet aſſurance of pardon, a comfortable perſuaſion of our reconciliation with GOD, an eſtabliſhed hope of eternal glory through *JESUS CHRIST;* theſe will be operative in the ſoul, as "a torch in the "ſheaf." Theſe will enkindle love, and increaſe watchfulneſs; theſe will beget the true humility of mind, and work an unfeigned abhorrence of ſin; theſe will enlarge the heart with charity, and exalt the affections above the world. Theſe are the proper, and the only effectual means of *making the man of GOD perfect,*

* Rev. iii. 1.

perfect, that is, *thoroughly furnished to every good work* *.

But the doubting frame is not fitted to yield any of these fruits. Nay, I am apprehensive, there are several graces, which can hardly be exercised, several duties, which can scarcely be performed, so long as this spirit of diffidence prevails.

Ther. Name them, *Aspasio.*

Asp. I am afraid, lest I should seem to arrogate the office of a teacher; which neither becomes my condition, nor is agreeable to my temper.

Ther. I beseech you, my dear friend, let us wave ceremony, and have nothing to do with compliments. My soul is in jeopardy. My present comfort, and my everlasting happiness are at stake. And shall we suffer any little punctilios to overbear such weighty considerations?

Suppose

* For the display and confirmation of these points, I do, with great pleasure, and without any diffidence, refer to Mr MARSHALL's *Gospel Mystery of Sanctification.* Which I shall not recommend in the style of a critic, or like a reader of taste, but with all the simplicity of the weakest Christian; I mean, from my own experience. It has been made one of the most useful books to my own soul. I scarce ever fail to receive spiritual consolation and strength from the perusal of it. And was I to be banished into some desolate island, possessed only of *two* books besides my BIBLE, this should be *one* of the two, and perhaps the first that I would chuse.

Should any person, hitherto a stranger to the work, purchase it on this recommendation, I must desire to suggest one caution;—That he be not surprised, if, in the beginning, he meets with something new, and quite out of the common road: or, if surprised, that he would not be offended, but calmly and attentively proceed. He will find the author's design opening itself by degrees. He will discern more and more the propriety of his method: and what might, at the first view, appear like a stumbling-block, will prove to be a fair, compendious, and ample avenue—to the palace of *truth*,—to the temple of *holiness*,—and to the bowers of *happiness*.——*Our author's particular recommendation of this invaluable book, in a preface to an edition printed of it in London, will be inserted in the 5th volume of this edition.*

Suppose you are a teacher; I have great need, and am very desirous, to become your scholar. For I freely confess, that, knowing as I may seem in other instances, I am very ignorant in the great peculiarities of the gospel. Nay, though I have read the scriptures in a *critical* view, I have been an utter stranger to their spiritual meaning. Here I am uninstructed as a babe. Here, therefore, I ought to be teachable as a babe. Yes, in this respect I would become as a *little child*, that I may enter into the knowledge, and possess the privileges of the kingdom of heaven.

Asp. Your answer, *Theron*, shall be a law.—*Love to GOD*, is the first commandment; and, without all peradventure, is the principal grace. But is it easy, is it possible to love GOD, before we have any persuasion of his love to us? This is what the apostles did not, could not do. And, if it exceeded their ability, it will doubtless be above the reach of our capacity. The thing may be attempted; the practice may be urged; we may see the necessity of it, and desire to perform it: but we shall never, never be able to exercise it, till we have some comfortable apprehension of GOD's reconciliation and good will to us. *We love HIM.*—Wherefore? from what inducement? *Because he first loved us* *; and because this love hath been made evident to our consciences, by the light of faith.

What think you of *delight in GOD?* This also is a Christian grace. But *how can two walk together, except they be agreed?* We never covet an intimacy with the person, who declares himself our enemy. Nay, if there be only a suspicion, that he bears us a secret ill-will, we shall be jealous of trusting him, and averse to approach him. This was the case of our first parents, immediately after the fall. Instead of drawing near to their CREATOR, with pleasure and gratitude; they fled from him, with anxiety and terror.

* 1 John iv. 10.

terror. And why? Becauſe they were under the alarming apprehenſions of his diſpleaſure.—Whereas, let us once believe, what the apoſtle affirms, *When we were enemies, we were reconciled to GOD by the death of his SON**. Let us cordially credit, what the prophet repeatedly declares, *Therefore will the LORD wait that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you* †. Then we ſhall ſeek his face with alacrity. Our affections will be on the wing to ſalute their almighty BENEFACTOR. We ſhall *joy in* GOD *through our* LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Ther. To the enjoyment of ſo many ſpiritual conſolations, and the exerciſe of ſeveral delightful graces, I acknowledge, an aſſured faith is neceſſary; but—

Aſp. Ay, *Theron*, you may well heſitate. It will be difficult to fill up the chaſm in your diſcourſe. For my

* Rom. v. 10.

† Iſ. xxx. 18. That admirable commentator VITRINGA, who generally draws his bow with a ſteady hand, and ſhoots his arrow with the exacteſt aim, here ſeems to miſs the mark. He appears to have thought, that *waiting to be gracious*, implies a *delay* in the exerciſe of the attribute, and is the ſame as to *abſtain from being* gracious. Had this been the meaning, the language would probably have been, not יחנכם, but מחנכם.—*To wait to be gracious*, ſignifies, to ſtand over a people with the continued tenders of grace and mercy, even while they refuſe to accept them. This was the caſe with GOD and *Iſrael*. GOD promiſed to defend the *Iſraelites*; they obſtinately refuſed to confide in his protection. GOD diſſuaded them from truſting in the ſuccour of Egypt; they preſumptuouſly reſolved to rely on that broken reed. *Therefore*, ſays GOD, *I will*—withdraw my ſlighted mercy? deny my deſpiſed aſſiſtance? This would be the manner of human procedure. But the LORD's ways are not as man's ways. His long-ſuffering triumphs over our perverſeneſs. Therefore he ſays, "I will "not turn away from them, in diſpleaſure; I will even wait "for them, and wait upon them, till they ſee their error, "and accept my favour."—Amazing condeſcenſion and goodneſs! I was going to ſay. But *divine* condeſcenſion and goodneſs are, if I may ſo ſpeak, infinitely more than amazing.

my part, I know not any duty of holineſs, which can be performed aright, without ſome degree of this confiding faith.—We are to *walk worthy of HIM, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory* *: but if we doubt, whether we in particular are called, how can this influence our converſation?—We are to be *followers of GOD, as* his *dear children* †. But if we do not, cannot, will not believe, ſo as to cry, "Abba, "FATHER," how can ſuch a conſideration ſway our hearts?—Nay, upon what principles can ſuch a perſon addreſs himſelf to diſcharge any office of the Chriſtian life? We are to *abound in the works of the LORD*, from the animating proſpect of a glorious reſurrection ‡. This he cannot do; becauſe he apprehends himſelf to have no lot or portion in the bleſſed hope.—We are to open our hands in charity to others, from a view of that heavenly kingdom, which was prepared for us from the foundation of the world ‖: we are to cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, on account of thoſe precious promiſes, which are freely given to us in CHRIST JESUS †: but where unbelieving doubts predominate, theſe endearing and invigorating motives are loſt. The man has no intereſt in the encouraging promiſes, has no title to the bliſsful inheritance; conſequently theſe ſinews of evangelical obedience, with reſpect to him, are benumbed, withered, dead.

Ther. Such a man may make prayers and ſupplications. Though he cannot rejoice in the privileges, he may requeſt them at the throne of grace.

Aſp. Prayer is a great duty, and as great a privilege. I wiſh my dear *Theron* the ſpirit of grace and ſupplication. This will be better, incomparably better and more advantageous, than a key to hidden treaſures. But how can you pray with humble boldneſs, or with lively hope, unleſs you believe? believe, that CHRIST is

* 1 Theſſ. ii. 12. † Eph. v. 1. ‡ 1 Cor. xv 58.
‖ Matth. xxv. 34. † 2 Cor. vii. 1.

is your High Priest; is *your* Intercessor with the FATHER; and, with the incense of his infinite merit, presents *your* petitions? Then, and then only, can you have, what the apostle calls, *boldness and access with confidence* *. Take notice of these vigorous expressions; and at your leisure consider, whether they countenance the suspicious and misgiving temper.—— At present observe, how yonder lark warbles and mounts in the firmament; as if she was bidding adieu to the earth, and going to mingle with the skies. An image *this* of believing prayer! Should a fowler shoot the soaring songster through the wing, how would she fall from her elevation, and flutter on the ground! An emblem *that* of distrusting prayer.

I know not how to leave this subject, without attending to the testimony of St *James*: than which nothing can be more awful, or more decisive. It should really alarm the doubting disposition, as much as any solicitation to the most horrid sin. It should alarm the whole religious world, as much as the beacons, suddenly kindled, and all on a flame, would alarm the inhabitants of the maritime coasts. *Let him pray in faith, nothing doubting*†; *for he that doubteth is*

* *Eph.* iii. 12. Προσαγωγὴν, *access with a chearing and graceful assurance*; such as those petitioners enjoy, who are introduced to the royal presence, by some distinguished favourite.—Παρρησίαν, *a boldness or unrestrained liberty of speech*; such as children use, when they present their addresses, and make known their requests, to an indulgent father.——Ἐν πεποιθήσει, *with a well-grounded and steady confidence*, that we shall obtain both a favourable acceptance, and a gracious answer.——And all this, *through the faith of CHRIST*; through the worthiness of his person, and the prevalence of his intercession.

† *Jam.* i. 6. N. B. *Nothing doubting*, is the apostle's explanation of *faith*.—Μηδὲν διακρινόμενος is, in our translation, *nothing wavering*. But the very same expression is rendered, *Acts* x. 20. *Nothing doubting*. The sense is, either way, alike. Tho' I think, *nothing wavering*, corresponds too nearly with the comparison, *like a wave*; makes something of a disagreeable

is like a wave of the sea, driven by the wind, and tossed. Nay, the apostle adds,—and it is an addition greatly to be regarded. It should abide with weight on our consciences; for it comes from a casuist, who could neither be too indulgent, through an excess of compassion; nor too rigorous, through an extravagance of zeal.—*Let not that man*, the doubting supplicant, *think, that he shall receive any thing of the* LORD.

Never then, my worthy friend, never more be an advocate for doubtings. Pursue them with fire and sword. Give them no quarter. Deal with them as *Saul* was commanded to treat the *Amalekites*.

Ther. If we are grieved at the remembrance of *past* sin, and feel an aversion to *all* sin; if the prevailing bias of our affections be to the divine REDEEMER, and the habitual breathing of our souls after a conformity to his image; may we not suppose ourselves possessed of the truth and reality, though we have not the confidence and rejoicing of faith? I say *we;* because I apprehend, this is not my peculiar case, but common to myself, and many other Christians of the weaker sort. I ask, therefore, in their name and in my own, May we not humbly suppose our condition safe, though we do not presume to use the language of the spouse, *My BELOVED is mine, and I am his?*

Asp. So you are still inclined to spare *Agag*; because delicately and speciously disguised, under the appearance of tenderness to weak souls. I should have thought, the text from St *James* must have done execution, like the prophet *Samuel*'s sword. But since corrosives succeed not, let us make trial of lenetives.

When the great JEHOVAH is pleased to say, *I am the LORD thy GOD;* then, upon this authentic warrant,

jingle; and flattens the force, or supercedes the necessity, of the following illustration.

warrant, to use the language of the spouse, is neither more nor less than to declare; "I am persuaded, that "CHRIST is faithful and true; that he says what "he thinks; and will do what he says." Whereas to deny this, by downright unbelief; or to question this, by living in suspense; is not humble duty, but proud disobedience. Might not the *LORD JESUS* justly complain, *What iniquity have* sinners *found in me?* what unkindness, or what unfaithfulness, that they are so much afraid of confiding in my grace, and of believing my word?

You ask, Whether the state of these persons is safe, and their faith real? I answer, Why should not their state be *happy*, and their faith *assured?* Why should you, or they, or any one, plead the cause of unbelief, and veil it with the plausible pretext of humility? Let these persons know, whatever their names or their circumstances are, that they have as good a right to adopt the words of the spouse, as we have to walk in these gardens, and enjoy their refined delights.—Yet they will do well to remember, that those qualifications, however amiable, are by no means the *ground* of their right. They are to advance their claim, and hold fast the blessing, not as men ornamented with fine endowments, but as poor, indigent, guilty sinners. For *such* the SAVIOUR is provided; to *such* his benefits are proposed, and on *such* his grace will be magnified.

Ther. Do you elude my question, or give up your point? One or the other my *Aspasio* certainly does.

Asp. Since my friend so peremptorily affirms, I will not have the ill manners to deny. I will own the former charge, the latter I cannot admit. I will own, that, at present, I had much rather act as a comforter, than as a disputant. On some other occasion I will undertake to consider, and endeavour to answer, all your objections.—In the mean time, I am far from giving up the point, barely by inquiring, Why such persons should lose their time, and perhaps

embarrass their minds, in these less profitable suppositions? when there is a direct, a compendious, and a certain method of obtaining peace, by appropriating CHRIST and his merits; without recurring to any such qualifications.

Nevertheless, if you insist upon a positive reply, I am obliged to declare, that faith consists in none of those qualifications which you describe. The language of faith is not,—"I feel such an aversion; I am actuated with such a bias; or I breathe such a desire." But—"GOD has freely loved me; CHRIST has graciously died for me; and the HOLY GHOST will assuredly sanctify me in the belief, the appropriating belief of these precious truths *."

But see, *Theron!* Yonder black and low-hung cloud points this way. It seems big with a shower; it marches on apace; and will soon be over our heads. We must instantly fly to shelter.

Ther. It is well we have this summer-house for our shelter. The thickest boughs would be insufficient to screen us. I think, I never saw a more impetuous burst of rain. A shower! No, 'tis a descending *deluge*. The large, ropy, reeking drops, come down like a torrent †.—Surprising! What a dreadful *flash* was

* If the reader finds this dialogue too long, *here* he will have a convenient resting-place.

† *Come down like a torrent.*—This is the import of that strong picturesque word רמה Psal. lxxvii. 17. In this manner, *The clouds poured out water; while the air thundered; and the arrows of the ALMIGHTY went abroad.* Mr *Addison*, if I remember right, admires the Psalmist's description of a *storm at sea*; because it dwells only upon the *grand* and *most striking* circumstances; without descending, like *Virgil*'s enervated representation, to such *little* particulars, as the cries of men, and the noise of oars. *Clamorque virum, stridorque rudentum.* —This description of *a tempest* is, I think, equally admirable on the same account. The three greatest and most terrible peculiarities

was there! A ſheet of ſulphureous fire, launched from the diſmal gloom, and wrapping the whole ſkies in a blaze!—Not a moment's interval between the lightning's rage, and the *thunder*'s roar. How ſudden and vaſt the exploſion! What a deep, prolonged, tremendous peal enſues! It ſeems as if the poles of earth, and the pillars of nature cracked!

See, my dear *Aſpaſio!* ſee the direful havock; the horrid effects of this elementary tumult.—Yonder oak, which reared its towering head aloft, and ſpread wide its graceful branches, is, in the twinkling of an eye, turned into a *naked trunk*. There it ſtands, ſinged and tore; ſtripped of its verdant honours *, and ſurrounded with its own ſhattered fragments. How fearful is the artillery of heaven!

Aſp. And why—why did not the blow fall on this guilty breaſt? Why was not the fiery bolt, which flew ſo near, commiſſioned to pierce our hearts?—If our

culiarities are ſelected; and expreſſed with all the conciſeneſs, yet with all the vigour, which language can unite.

I have not met with any commentator, who enters into the ſpirit of the next verſe. And in our liturgy-tranſlation its majeſty ſinks into meanneſs, its propriety degenerates into tautology. Whereas, it is by no means a vain repetition; but heightens and enlarges the formidable idea, by diſplaying *the effects* of what had been deſcribed, in the foregoing lines. *The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven;* the volleys not only reſounded, but reſounded from pole to pole, and filled גלגל the vaſt circumference of the ſkies. *The lightnings lightened the world;* the flaſhes not only ſhone, but ſhone far and near, and illuminated the whole world with their blaze. *The earth trembled* to its centre, *and* its inhabitants *ſhook* with horror.

* Does not this give us the moſt awful and grand ſenſe of *Pſal.* xxix. 9.? *The voice of the LORD*, when uttered in thunder, and accompanied with lightning, יחשף יערות, not *diſcovereth the thick buſhes*, but *ſtrips the foreſts;* lays bare the branching woods; reduces the moſt magnificent and flouriſhing cedars to naked and withered trunks.

our heavenly FATHER has been so tenderly careful of these perishing *bodies*, will he not be much more gracious to our immortal *souls?* Will he not clothe them with that immaculate robe, which is the only security from the stroke of eternal vengeance?—And let me ask, can this be a security to us, unless we are vested with it! Could this building, though very substantial, have secured us from the rushing rains, if we had not betaken ourselves to its friendly covert!

CHRIST is represented, in the prophecy of *Isaiah*, by this very image; as *a place of refuge, and as a covert from the storm and from rain* *. That is, his merits and death are a sure protection from the curse of the law, and the damnation of hell. No fury of the elements so terrible as *these;* no bulwark of stone so impregnable as *those.*—If this is a proper emblem of CHRIST, to what shall we liken *faith?* To a persuasion, that the shelter of the summer house is *free* for our use? To a high esteem of its accommodation, an earnest desire after its protection, or an habitual tendency towards it?—Would this defend us from the inclemencies of the weather? Would this keep us dry, amidst (what you call) the descending deluge? Would this esteem, desire, or tendency, unless carried into actual entrance and possession, be a proper safeguard, or indeed any manner of advantage to our persons?

Ther. No, *Aspasio;* neither would a persuasion that the summer-house *is mine.*

Asp. True: but a belief that CHRIST is mine, is like entering the summer-house. When the divine SPIRIT reveals the obedient and dying SAVIOUR in my heart; when I am enabled to believe, that his death was the desert of my sins, and his obedience is the matter of my justification; when I live in the exercise of this appropriating faith, then I find that comfort, and I receive that benefit, which correspond with the repose and security we now enjoy from this hospitable structure.

* Is. iv. 6.

Ther.

Ther. May I then, from this inſtant, look upon *CHRIST*, his glorious perſon, his perfect righteouſneſs, and his precious death, as my *certain* inheritance? May I firmly believe, that through this grand immenſely-meritorious cauſe, I ſhall have pardon and acceptance, true holineſs and endleſs ſalvation?

Aſp. Why ſhould you not believe all this *firmly?* You have the ſame reaſon to believe with a ſteady confidence, as to believe with any degree of affiance. It is the free promiſe of the goſpel, addreſſed to *ſinners*, that warrants the latter; and the very ſame promiſe, under the ſame circumſtances of *unmerited* munificence, authorizes the former.

You have heard my opinion, hear now what our LORD himſelf ſays; *Let him that is athirſt, come; and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely* *. He may partake of my ſpiritual and unſpeakable bleſſings, as freely as he makes uſe of the moſt common refreſhments; as freely as he drinks of the running ſtream. This is his royal proclamation.—Hear his gracious invitation. *Look unto me, and be ye ſaved* †; ſaved from your diſquieting fears, by juſtification; ſaved from your domineering corruptions, by ſanctification; ſaved from every evil, by complete and eternal redemption. To whom is this moſt affectionate call directed? Not to a few diſtinguiſhed favourites only, but to *all the ends of the earth*. None are excepted; none are prohibited; and can my *Theron* imagine, that *he* is excluded?

Nay farther, hear our LORD's earneſt intreaty; hear his tender and repeated importunity; *As tho' GOD did beſeech you by us, we pray you, in CHRIST's ſtead, be ye reconciled to GOD* ‡. Hark! 'Tis the voice of infinitely-condeſcending love, ſpeaking by his ambaſſador:—"Sinners, accept my great ſalvation. Enjoy what I have purchaſed for you, by my dying agonies.

* Rev. xxii. 17. † Iſ. xlv. 22. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 20.

" agonies. Do not ſuſpect my kindneſs, or refuſe my " gifts. This will wound me deeper, than the ſpear " which pierced my heart."—O! the grace of our exalted KING. He bows from his celeſtial throne. He almoſt kneels to his guilty creatures. He begs, he even begs of obnoxious ſinners, not to reject his mercies.—After all this, can you entertain the leaſt doubt, *Theron*, whether you have a permiſſion to believe firmly?

Ther. This is extraordinary goodneſs indeed! I have often read theſe paſſages, but never ſaw them, till this hour, in a light ſo engaging and ſo encouraging.

Aſp. Should not this threefold cord be ſtrong enough to draw my dear friend; let me add (what muſt abſolutely ſuperſede all objections) the plain, expreſs, peremptory command of the ALMIGHTY: *This is his command, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son JESUS CHRIST* *. Pray, examine the language; not he *allows* only; or barely *adviſes;* but *commands*. We are not only permitted, but ſtrictly required. It is not only our privilege, but GOD's poſitive injunction.—Upon the diſcovery of ſuch a SAVIOUR, methinks every heart ſhould cry; " O " that I might be allowed to approach him! to ſolicit " an intereſt in him! How gladly would I wait, ever " ſo long a time, in ever ſo mean a poſture, if I might " at the laſt receive him as my portion?"—The ſuperabundant goodneſs of GOD prevents our wiſhes, and exceeds our hopes. " I freely give my SON," ſaith the LORD, " and all his riches to you. I be- " ſeech you as a compaſſionate *friend*, not to refuſe " him. I injoin you, as an uncontrollable *Sovereign*, " to believe on him."—How gracious! moſt amazingly gracious is this command! And give me leave to hint, it is the greateſt and moſt important command that ever iſſued from the throne of glory. If this be neglected, no other can be kept; if this be obſerved, all

* 1 John iii. 23.

all others will be easy.—Now, *Theron*, will you not receive *CHRIST*, and look upon his all-sufficient merits as your own? Is not your warrant clear and unexceptionable? nay, is not your obligation strong and indispensable?

Ther. Truly, *Aspasio*, you put all my mistrustful apprehensions to the stand. Here is a proclamation from the blessed GOD,—seconded by his invitation,—accompanied by his intreaty,—and all enforced by his command. I know not what can be a fuller proof of your point, or a stronger inducement to believe.

Asp. Yes, my friend, I can produce (if such a thing be possible) stronger proof still; such as, I hope, will totally rout unbelief, and drive all her forces from the field.

GOD has not only invited you, intreated you, and commanded you to live under the sweet persuasion, that his SON is your SAVIOUR; but he has given you the grandest *ratification* of this precious truth.—He has passed his word; he has made you a firm promise; nay, he has given you *many* and *various* promises, of this inestimable blessing. And *GOD is not a man, that he should lie; or the SON of man, that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good* *? Heaven and earth may drop into nothing, sooner than one promise, or indeed one jot or tittle of his promise, should fall to the ground.

Besides this, he has given you, if I may so speak, a note under his own hand. He has *recorded* his promises in the Bible, and *written* them with an everlasting pen: so that they will stand conspicuous and indelible, like a bill drawn upon heaven, and a basis laid for faith, so long as the sun and moon endure.

Nay, he has confirmed all, by the most solemn sanction imaginable; by his *oath;* by *his own* oath; by the

* Numb. xxiii. 19.

the oath of *a GOD*. Tho' his word is sure, and his promise immutable, he adds (astonishing condescension! adorable benignity!) he adds HIS OATH to all.—He not only speaks, but swears, swears by himself; swears by his own eternal existence; that his promises belong—*to whom*? Mark this particular with the most exact attention. To whom do those promises belong, which are ratified in this unequalled and inviolable manner?—To the holy, the upright, the accomplished?—To those, says the scripture, *who fly for refuge to the hope set before them* *; the hope set before them in the propitiation, the righteousness, the ineffable merits of CHRIST.

Ther. May I then believe, firmly believe, assuredly believe, that JESUS the Mediator, and all the rich benefits of his mediation, are mine? Pardon me, *Aspasio*, for reiterating the question. I am really, with respect to the obedience of faith, too much like that *Saxon* monarch, who, for his remissness and inactivity, was sirnamed *The Unready* †.

Asp. I do more than pardon my dear *Theron*. I feel for him, and I sympathize with him. If there is some of that *Saxon* prince's disease running in his religion; I am sure, there is too much of it in mine; and I fear it is an *epidemical* distemper. But let us reflect a moment.—Suppose any neighbour of substance and credit, should bind himself by a deliberate *promise*, to do you some particular piece of service;—if he should add to his promise a *note* under his own hand;—if he should corroborate both by some authentic *pledge*;—if he should establish all by a most awful and solemn *oath*:—could you suspect the sincerity of his engagement, or harbour any doubt with regard to its execution? This would be most unreasonable in any one; and to your generous temper, I am very certain, it would be impossible.—Let us remember, that GOD has given us all this cause for an assurance of faith, and

* Heb. vi. 17, 18. † ETHELRED.

and more. Nay, I will defy the moſt timorous and ſuſpicious temper, to demand from the *moſt treacherous* perſon on earth, a greater, ſtronger, fuller ſecurity, than the GOD of infinite fidelity has granted to you and me.—After all this, one would think, diffidence itſelf could no longer heſitate, nor the moſt jealous incredulity demur. Shall we, can we with-hold that affiance from the unchangeable CREATOR, which we could not but repoſe on a falliole creature?

Ther. You rouſe and animate me, *Aſpaſio*. O! that I may ariſe, and, with the divine aſſiſtance, ſhake off this ſtupor of unbelief! Certainly, it can never be honourable to GOD, nor pleaſing to CHRIST, nor profitable to ourſelves.

Aſp. If it be, then cheriſh it; maintain it; and never relinquiſh it.—But how can it be *honourable to GOD?* It depretiates his goodneſs; it is a reproach to his veracity; nay, the apoſtle ſcruples not to affirm, that it *makes him a liar* *. Whereas, they who believe his teſtimony, glorify his faithfulneſs; glorify his beneficence; and, as *John* the Baptiſt ſpeaks, *ſet to their ſeal, that GOD is true* † —I have been informed, that, when the late *Elector* of *Hanover* was declared, by the parliament of *Great Britain*, ſucceſſor to the vacant throne; ſeveral perſons of diſtinction waited upon his Highneſs, in order to make timely application for the moſt valuable preferments. Several requeſts of this nature were granted, and each was confirmed by a kind of promiſſory note. One gentleman, particularly, ſolicited for the *Maſterſhip* of the *Rolls*. Being indulged in his deſire, he was offered the ſame confirmation, which had been vouchſafed to other ſucceſsful petitioners. Upon which, he ſeemed to be under a pang of graceful confuſion and ſurpriſe; begged, that he might not put the royal donor to ſuch unneceſſary trouble; at the ſame time proteſting, that he looked upon his Highneſs's *word*, as the very beſt ratification

* 1 John v. 10. † John iii. 33.

tification of his ſuit.—With this conduct, and this compliment, the Elector was not a little pleaſed. "This "is the gentleman," he ſaid, "who does me a real ho- "nour; treats me *like a king;* and whoever is diſap- "pointed, he ſhall certainly be gratified." So, we are aſſured by the teſtimony of revelation, that the patriarch, *who ſtaggered not* through unbelief, *gave*, and in the moſt ſignal, the moſt acceptable manner, *glory to GOD* *.

Is it *pleaſing to CHRIST!*—Quite the reverſe. It diſhonours his merit; it detracts from the dignity of his righteouſneſs; it would enervate the power of his interceſſion. Accordingly you may obſerve, there is nothing which our LORD ſo frequently reproved in his followers, as this ſpirit of unbelief.—What ſays he to his diſciples, when he came down from the mount of transfiguration? *O faithleſs and perverſe* †*generation!* They were perverſe, becauſe faithleſs.—What ſays he to the travellers, whom he overtook in their journey to *Emmaus? O fools, and ſlow of heart to believe* ‡*!* They were fools, becauſe ſlow to believe.—What ſays he to the apoſtles, after his reſurrection? *JESUS upbraided them with their unbelief* ||. He took no notice of

* Rom. iv. 20.

† Διεστραμμενη, Matth. xvii. 17. A believing ſtate of mind, is like ſome *well arranged* and beautiful ſyſtem of limbs. Unbelief *diſlocates* the parts, *diſiorts* the harmonious frame, and diſfigures its comely proportion.

‡ Ανοητοι, Luke xxiv. 25. Not *thoughtleſs*, but *ſtupid* creatures; void of underſtanding; as we ſay in *Engliſh*, *without common ſenſe;* or, as *Horace* would have ſaid in *Latin*,

O tribus Anticyris caput inſanabile!

|| *Mark* xvi. 14. The word is not επετιμησεν, as in *Luke* xvii. 3. not ελεγξον, as in *Tit.* i. 13. but ωνειδισε. Which ſignifies, not barely a rebuke, but a rebuke accompanied with *keen* and *ſtinging* reflections; ſuch as may cover the face with bluſhes, and wound the heart with anguiſh.—It is uſed, by the Evangeliſt *Luke*, and by the apoſtle *Peter*, to deſcribe thoſe calumnies, invectives, and reproaches, with which the perſecutors of Chriſtianity endeavour-

ed

of their cowardly and perfidious behaviour; he inveighed against none of their other follies and infirmities; but he upbraided them with their unbelief. Not *gently rebuked*. No; this was a fault so unreasonable in itself, so reproachful to their MASTER, so pernicious to themselves, that he *severely reprimanded* them for it; with an air of vehemence, and with a mixture of invective.

Is it *profitable to ourselves?*—Nothing less. It damps our love, and diminishes our comfort. It subjects us to that fear, which hath torment; and disqualifies us for that obedience, which is filial. In a word, this distrustful and unbelieving temper weakens every principle of piety, and impoverishes the whole soul.—Whence come spiritual oscitancy and remissness? whence proceed sterility and unfruitfulness in the knowledge of CHRIST? St *Peter* ascribes them all to an habitual unbelief. Such persons, he says, *have forgotten that they were purged from their former sins* *.—In the regenerate, where it remains, it is very detrimental; for *they that will not believe, shall not be established* †. In the unregenerate, where it prevails, it is absolutely destructive; and though it may not kill like an apoplexy, it wastes like a consumption. *They could not enter in, because of unbelief* ‡.

Let us then, my dear friend, *cast away this sin*, which *so easily besets us* both. It clogs our feet; it hampers all our powers; and hinders us from *running*, with alacrity and speed, *the race that is set before us*.—What says *David? GOD hath spoken in his holiness* ‖; hath made an express and inviolable promise, that I shall

ed to *gall* and *afflict* the Christians. *Luke* vi. 22. 1 *Pet.* iv. 14.—Though our LORD JESUS was most amiably tender and gentle; yet, when severity was necessary and wholesome, he knew how to be severe. Our all wise PHYSICIAN could apply the *caustic*, as well as administer the *cordial*.

* 2 Pet. i. 8, 9. † Is. vii. 9. ‡ Heb. iii. 19.
‖ Psal. lx. 6.

shall be ruler of his people *Israel*. *I will rejoice therefore;* away with every alarming apprehension; I will even exult and triumph. Nay more; *I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth;* I will look upon the whole land as my own. I will divide it, and dispose of it, just as if it was already in my possession.—Why should not you and I also say? *GOD hath spoken in his holiness;* hath expressly and solemnly declared, *The promise* of an all-sufficient SAVIOUR *is to you. We will rejoice therefore;* confiding in this most faithful word, we will bid adieu to all disquieting fears, and make our boast of this glorious REDEEMER. Yes; notwithstanding all our unworthiness, CHRIST and his atonement, CHRIST and his righteousness, are ours. GOD hath passed his word; and, amidst all our temptations, his word is our anchor; its hold is firm, and its ground immoveable *.

Ther. I have heard some people distinguish between the faith of *reliance*, and the faith of *assurance;* between the *reflex* and the *direct* act of faith. Methinks, I approve these sentiments, though I dislike the terms. The sentiments are happily adapted to the relief of human infirmity; though the terms are rather too abstruse for ordinary capacities to understand.

Asp.

* This very important doctrine is more copiously displayed, in some sermons of Mr *Ebenezer Erskine*'s on the *assurance of faith*, vol. III. p. 201.*—Was I to read, in order to refine my taste, or improve my style; I would prefer Bishop *Atterbury*'s sermons, Dr *Bates*'s works, or Mr *Seed*'s discourses. But was I to read, with a single view to the edification of my heart, in true faith, solid comfort, and evangelical holiness; I would have recourse to Mr *Erskine*, and take his volumes for *my guide, my companion, and my own familiar friend.*

* This refers to a select collection of Messrs *Ebenezer* and *Ralph Erskine's* sermons published at *London*, in three volumes Octavo. The sermons on the *assurance of faith* are to be found in the first volume of Mr *Ebenezer Erskine*'s sermons printed at *Edinburgh* in 1761.

Asp. I cannot say, that I am very fond, either of one, or of the other. In my opinion, they both partake too much of the subtilty of the schools; and are more likely to create perplexity, than to administer godly edifying. For which reason, I should chuse to drop the difficult phrases, and not to dwell on the nice distinctions. Yet, if we must not dismiss them, without some notice, I would just remark,—

That the faith of *reliance*, in its true scriptural sense, includes or presupposes a degree of assurance.—*Includes;* for what is reliance, but a repose of the mind, which is attended with tranquillity, and excludes perturbation? How can this take place, if there be no sort of conviction, that *the LORD is my light and my salvation?—Presupposes;* for who would rely on a satisfaction made, without being persuaded, that the satisfaction is for him and his iniquities? Reliance, separated from this persuasion, seems to be neither comfortable, nor reasonable.

As to those who insist upon what they call the *reflex* act of faith; sure, they mistake the nature of the thing. This, if I understand them aright, is their way of arguing; "I am a new creature; I love the "LORD JESUS in sincerity; I have the fruits "of the SPIRIT. From whence it is plain, that "CHRIST and his salvation are mine." Now, in all this procedure, I cannot discern the least footstep of faith; no not the least trace of receiving a testimony, or relying upon a SAVIOUR. Here is nothing more than a logical deduction of one proposition from another; a conclusion drawn from given premises. Grant the latter, and any person, without any aid from the SPIRIT, will infer the former. It may, therefore, more properly be reckoned an act of reasoning, than of believing; it is founded on what we ourselves *feel*, not upon the *record* of a faithful GOD; and it is styled, by judicious writers, the assurance of *sense* rather than of faith.

When

When, in conformity to the aforementioned opinion, we are adviſed to prove our title to comfort, by genuine marks of converſion; and taught on this column to fix the capital of aſſurance; I would rather propoſe a queſtion, than advance objections.—Is not this ſomewhat like placing the dome of a cathedral upon the ſtalk of a tulip?

Ther. No, ſay they; it was the practice of the apoſtle himſelf; and he has left it upon record, as a pattern for all poſterity to copy. *We know that we are paſſed from death unto life, becauſe we love the brethren.*

Aſp. Obſerve, *Theron*, the proceſs of the apoſtle's reaſoning. It is like the form of an inverted cone; where you have firſt the point, and from thence proceed to the baſe. So the ſacred writer begins with the leſs, and aſcends to the greater proof. He ſays, in one of the following verſes; *Hereby perceive we the love of GOD*, becauſe he laid down his life*, not merely for ſinners, but *for us* in particular.—Here, you ſee, is aſſurance by the direct act of faith. From this truth believed, from this bleſſing received, the love of the brethren takes its riſe. Which may very juſtly be admitted as an evidence, that our faith is real, and our aſſurance no deluſion. As yonder leaves may ſerve to diſtinguiſh the particular ſpecies, and aſcertain the healthy ſtate of the trees on which they grow. When

* 1 *John* iii. 16. The word *GOD* is not in the original. It was omitted by the apoſtle, juſt as the particular name is omitted by *Mary*, when ſhe ſpeaks to the gardener; *Sir, if thou haſt borne* him *hence*;—and by the *church*, when ſhe addreſſes the ſacred object of her affection; *Let* him *kiſs me with the kiſſes of his mouth:* John xx. 15. Cantic. i. 1.—In all which places, there is a language, a very emphatical language, even in the ſilence. It declares, how deeply the heart was penetrated, how totally the thoughts were poſſeſſed, by the beloved and illuſtrious ſubject. It expreſſes alſo the ſuperlative dignity and amiableneſs of the perſon meant: as though *he*, and he *alone*, either was or deſerved to be known and admired by *all*. For which reaſon, to mention his name, or diſplay his excellencies, ſeemed as *needleſs*, as to ſhew light to the opened eye.

When your tenants bring in their rent, this affords no contemptible evidence, that the lands which they respectively occupy, are yours. But this is a proof which does not occur, every day or every week; it is occasional only, and of the subordinate kind.—The *grand* demonstration, that which is always at hand, and always forcible, is your possession of the *deeds* of conveyance. Thus, the promise of GOD in his divine word is our charter, or the authentic conveyance of our right to pardon and salvation. Make just the same difference between this promise, and your own holiness, as you make between the writings of your estate and the receival of the revenues; you will then judge aright, because your judgment will co-incide with the apostle's.

Besides, this method of seeking peace and assurance, I fear, will perplex the simple-minded; and cherish, rather than suppress, the fluctuations of doubt. For, let the marks be what you please, a love of the brethren or a love of all righteousness, a change of heart or an alteration of life; these good qualifications are sometimes like the stars at noon-day, *not easily*, if at all, discernable; or else they are like a glow-worm in the night, *glimmering*, rather than shining; consequently will yield, at the best, but a feeble, at the worst, a very precarious evidence.—If, in such a manner, we should acquire some little assurance, how soon may it be unsettled by the incursions of daily temptation, or destroyed by the insurrection of remaining sin! At such a juncture, how will it keep its standing! how retain its being! It will fare like a tottering wall, before the tempest; or be *as the rush without mire, and the flag without water* *.

Instead therefore of poring on our own hearts, to discover, by inherent qualities, our interest in CHRIST, I should rather renew my application to the free and faithful promise of the LORD; assert and maintain my

* Job viii. 11.

my title, on this *unalterable* ground.—" Pardon is " mine, I would say grace is mine, CHRIST and " all his spiritual blessings are mine. Why? because " I am conscious of sanctifying operations in my own " breast? Rather because *GOD hath spoken in his* " *holiness;* because all these precious privileges are " consigned over to me in the everlasting gospel, with " a *clearness* unquestionable as the truth, with a *cer-* " *tainty* inviolable as the oath of GOD."

Cast your eye into yonder meadow. Take notice of that industrious *fisherman;* how intent he is upon the pursuit of his business. He has just thrown his net, and taken a considerable booty. You do not see him spending his time in idle triumphs, on account of his success. He does not stand to measure the dimensions of the fish, or compute the value of his prize. But having, without delay, secured the captives; he prepares for *another* cast, and hopes for *another* draught.

So let us, instead of exulting in any past acquisitions, seek afresh to the inexhaustible fulness of our SAVIOUR, for renewed communications. If we have been blessed with any taste of his goodness, or any tokens of his love, let us not too fondly dote upon the sweetness of such experiences. Let us not make them the foundation of our confidence, but only so many encouragements to persevere and advance in believing: that, having life and having peace from our divine HEAD, we may have them *more abundantly**. Then will be fulfilled the saying which was written; *The just*, the righteous in *JESUS CHRIST—shall live*, shall not only be delivered from condemnation and death, but shall thrive in comfort, and flourish in holiness:—How? by reflecting on their sanctification, or viewing their own attainments? No; but by the infinitely more encouraging views of their completeness in CHRIST, and *by* a fresh, a repeated, a never-ceasing

* John x. 10.

ceasing exercise of *faith* *, on that HOLY ONE of GOD.

This, I verily think, nay this, the apostle testifies, is the *most effectual* way of feeding that lamp, and quickening that flame; which, having cheared us in our earthly pilgrimage, will be brightened up into immortal glory in the heavens.

Here they went in; and, after a slight refreshment, took coach.—As they were returning home, *Theron* observed, not without concern, the changed and melancholy aspect of things, in the territories of the husbandman. The fields of corn, which, a little while ago, were gracefully erect, or softly inclining to the breeze, lay sunk and flatted under the impetuous rains. —Such, added *Aspasio*, such I apprehend will be our faith, if it aspires not after assurance, or if its assurance is erected on any endowments of our own.

Ther. If this is the case, what can be the reason, why so many people are totally destitute of all religious assurance? have no notion of it, much less aspire after it? and as to *full* assurance, they would be much surprised, perhaps highly disgusted, at the very mention of such a doctrine?

Asp. If people never aspire after the assurance of faith, or an *appropriating* interest in *CHRIST*, I very much question, whether they are truly awakened, or really in earnest. They are like the men of *Ephraim*, whom the prophet styles *a cake not turned* †; neither bread, nor yet dough; neither absolute reprobates, nor real saints. Or, as our LORD explains the proverb, in his charge against the church of *Laodicea*, they are *neither hot nor cold* ‡; not frozen in insensibility, 'tis true; at the same time, not fervent in spirit; but indifferent and lukewarm in the concerns of religion.—As to a *full* assurance, or the highest degree of this grace, was I to declare myself more explicitly upon

* Rom. i. 17. † Hos. vii. 8. ‡ Rev. iii. 15.

on this point, it ſhould be in the calm and moderate words of a judicious divine; "I do not affirm, that, "without a *full* aſſurance, there is no faith. But this "I maintain, that where-ever the latter exiſts, there "will be a ſincere purſuit of the former."

Among the reaſons why ſo few perſons attain this eminent bleſſing, we may reckon the following.—They underſtand not the perfect *freeneſs* of grace, nor the *immenſe* merits of *CHRIST*.—They never conſider the unſpeakable *value* of an aſſured faith; neither are they aware, that it is intended for the enjoyment of *ſinners*.—Either they ſeek it not at all; or elſe they ſeek it, where it is not to be found; from ſome works of righteouſneſs in themſelves, rather than from the gracious promiſe of GOD in his word: which is altogether as ill judged, and as ſure to iſſue in diſappointment, as if a perſon ſhould go in queſt of ice amidſt the torrid zone, or expect to find ſpicy iſlands under the northern pole.

But whether people conſider it or no, the value of an aſſured faith is indeed unſpeakable. When this is wrought in the heart, peace will ſtand firm, and afflictions drop their ſting. Prayer will return laden with treaſures, and death will approach ſtripped of its terrors. The ſoul will be *as a watered garden*, and all her graces *bloſſom as a roſe*.—When this is wrought in the heart, the goſpel of *CHRIST* will appear with new charms, and operate with new energy. Its hymns will no longer be a ſtrange language to your ear, nor its privileges as forbidden fruit to your palate. You will then, as you peruſe each ſacred page, feel it to be the power of GOD, and *taſte that the LORD is gracious* *. You will reap a benefit, and enjoy a delight, as much ſuperior to thoſe of the doubting reader, as the pleaſure of *eating* this delicious peach is ſuperior to the mere deſcription of its agreeable reliſh.

Bear

* 1 Pet. ii. 3.

Bear with me a moment longer, *Theron*. For you can hardly imagine, what an improvement and exaltation this will give to every *truth* you contemplate, and every *object* you behold.—When you contemplate the rise of kingdoms, and the fall of empires; when you recollect the many great and astonishing events recorded in the history of nations; how highly delightful must it be to say, "All these passed under the "superintendency of *that hand*, which was pierced "with the bloody nail, and fastened to the cursed "cross for me!"—When you behold the magnificence of creation, and the richness of its furniture; the grandeur of nature, and the variety of her works; what a heightened pleasure must they all impart, if, as you view the glorious scene, your thoughts make answer to your eyes; "All these were brought into "existence by *that adorable PERSON*, who sustain-"ed my guilt, and wrought out my justifying righ-"teousness!"

O! that we may possess this *precious faith* *! that it may grow incessantly, *grow exceedingly* †! till it be *rooted*, like those full-grown oaks, under which we lately-walked! and *grounded* ‡, like that well-built edifice, which is still in our view!

Ther. I join with my *Aspasio* in this wish; and must beg of him to inform me, how I may attain so desirable a blessing.

Asp. You have entirely cured me, *Theron*, of making apologies: would to GOD I might be as successfully instrumental in delivering my friend from his doubts! that the gospel might come to us, as it came to the *Thessalonians*, *not in word only*, *but in power*, *and in the HOLY GHOST*, *and in much assurance* ‖!

Prayer is the first expedient. Every good gift is from

* 2 Pet. i. 1. † 2 Thess. i. 3.

‡ *Rooted and grounded*, ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι. These are the apostle's beautiful ideas, or rather expressive similitudes, each comprehended in a single word, *Eph*. iij. 18.

‖ 1 Thess. i. 5.

from above, and cometh down from the FATHER of lights. *CHRIST* is not only the object, but the author and finisher of our faith. *LORD, increase our faith*, was the request of the disciples, and should be the prevailing language of our hearts.

Lay up many of the divine *promises* in your memory. Stock that noble cabinet with this invaluable treasure. *Faith cometh by hearing* *, by meditating on, by praying over, this word of life, and word of grace. —And never, never forget the *freeness*, with which the promise is made, and its good things are bestowed. You are to receive the one, and apply the other, not with a full, but with an empty hand; not as a righteous person, but as an unworthy creature.

Make the trial. Exercise yourself in this great secret of true godliness. I am satisfied, it will be productive of the most beneficial effects.—Look unto *JESUS* as dying in *your* stead, and purchasing both grace and glory for *your* enjoyment. Come unto GOD, as a poor sinner, yet with a *confident* dependence; expecting all spiritual blessings, thro' HIM that loved *you*, and gave himself for *you*.—*He that believeth*, with this appropriating faith, *shall not be confounded* †, nor frustrated in his expectations. *He that believeth* with this appropriating faith, *shall have the witness in himself* ‡. Nothing will bring in such light and peace, such holiness and happiness to his soul.—The *Ephesians*, thus believing, *were sealed with that holy SPIRIT of promise* ||. The dispersed of *Israel*, thus believing, *rejoiced*

* *Rom.* x. 17. On which account the scriptures are styled, *the words of faith*, 1 *Tim.* iv. 6.

† 1 Pet. ii. 6. ‡ 1 John v. 10.

|| *Eph.* i. 13. Πιστευσαντες εσφραγισθητε, not *after that ye believed, ye were sealed;* but *believing ye were sealed.* In the way of believing, ye became partakers of this sealing and sanctifying SPIRIT. Conformably to the expostulation of the apostle on another occasion, *Received ye the SPIRIT by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

rejoiced with joy unſpeakable *. Theſe were *marked out* as rightful heirs, theſe were bleſſed with ſome delightful *foretaſtes*, and both were prepared for the complete fruition, of life and immortality. O! that we may *be followers of their example, and ſharers of their felicity!*

As for thoſe doubts which have given you ſo much perplexity, and coſt us ſo long a diſquiſition, look upon them as ſome of your *greateſt enemies*. Oppoſe them with all the reſolution and all the vigour of your mind.—Nay, look upon thoſe unreaſonable doubts, as ſome of your *greateſt ſins*. Confeſs them, with the deepeſt ſhame; and pray againſt them, with the utmoſt ardour.—With equal aſſiduity and zeal, let us preſs after a ſtedfaſt, an immoveable, a triumphant faith.—Faith is the vehicle and the inſtrument of every good; *All things are poſſible to him that believeth* †.—Faith is the immediate and grand end of the whole goſpel; *Theſe things are written, that ye might believe* ‡.—Let us therefore covet, earneſtly let us covet this beſt of gifts, and *ſhew all diligence to the* FULL ASSURANCE *of hope* ‖.

* 1 Pet. i. 8. † Mark ix. 23. ‡ John xx. 31. ‖ Heb. vii. 11.

DIALOGUE XVII.

THE next morning, *Theron* ordered a cold collation to be prepared, and his pleaſure-boat to hold itſelf in readineſs.——Breakfaſt being diſpatched, and ſome neceſſary orders relating to the family given:—Now, ſays he to *Aſpaſio*, let me fulfil my promiſe; or rather let us execute our mutual engagement; and conſign the remainder of this mild and charming day to a rural excurſion.

We will take our rout along one of the *fineſt roads* in the world: A road incomparably more curious and durable,

durable, than the famous cauſeys raiſed by thoſe puiſſant hands which conquered the globe: A road which has ſubſiſted from the beginning of time; and, though frequented by innumerable carriages, laden with the heavieſt burdens, has never been gulled, never wanted repair, to this very hour.—Upon this, they ſtep into the chariot, and are conveyed to a large *navigable river*, about three quarters of a mile diſtant from the houſe.——Here they launch upon a new element, attended by two or three ſervants, expert at handling the oar, and managing the nets.

Is this the road, replied *Aſpaſio*, on which my friend beſtows his panegyric? It is indeed more curious in its ſtructure, and more durable in its ſubſtance, than the celebrated *Roman* cauſeys: though I muſt aſſure you, the latter have a very diſtinguiſhed ſhare of my eſteem. I admire them far beyond *Trajan*'s pillar, or *Garacalla*'s baths; far beyond the idle pomp of the *Pantheon*, or the worſe than idle magnificence of the *amphitheatre*. They do the trueſt honour to the empire; becauſe, while they were the glory of *Rome*, they were a general good *; and not only a monument of her grandeur, but a benefit to mankind.

But more than all theſe works, I admire that excellent and divinely-gracious purpoſe, to which Providence made the empire itſelf ſubſervient. It was a kind of road or cauſey for the everlaſting goſpel, and afforded the word of life a free paſſage to the very ends of the earth. The *evangelical* dove mounted the wings of the *Roman* eagle; and flew, with ſurpriſing

* Theſe roads ran through all Italy, and ſtretched themſelves into the territories of France. They were carried acroſs the Alps, the Pyrenean mountains, and through the whole kingdom of Spain. Some of them, towards the ſouth, reached even to Æthiopia; and ſome of them, towards the north, extended as far as Scotland. The remains of ſeveral of them continue in England to this day: though they were made, it is probable, above 1600 years ago.

prising expedition, through all nations.—Who would have thought, that insatiable ambition, and the most bloody wars should be paving a way for the PRINCE of humility and peace? How remote from all human apprehension was such a design; and how contrary to the natural result of things was such an event! Most remarkably therefore was that observation of the Psalmist verified; *His ways are in the sea, and his paths in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known* *.

Conversing on such agreeable subjects, they were carried, by the stream, thro' no less agreeable scenes. They pass by hills clothed with hanging woods, and woods arrayed in varying green. Here, excluded from a sight of the outstretched plains, they are entertained with a group of *unsubstantial* images, and the wonders of a *mimic* creation.—Another sun shines, but stript of his blazing beams, in the watery concave: while clouds sail along the downward skies, and sometimes disclose, sometimes draw a veil over, the radiant orb. Trees, with their inverted tops, either flourish in the fair serene below; or else paint, with a pleasing delusion, the pellucid flood. Even the mountains are there, but in a headlong posture; and, notwithstanding their prodigious bulk, they quiver in this floating mirror, like the poplar-leaves which adorn their sides.

Soon as the boat advances, and disturbs the placid surface; the waves, pushed hastily to the bank, bear off, in broken fragments, the *liquid landscape*. The spreading circles seemed to prophesy, as they rolled; and pronounced the pleasures of this present state,—the pomp of power, the charm of beauty, and the echo of fame;—pronounced them *transient*, as their speedy passage; *empty*, as their unreal freight.—Seemed to prophesy? It was more. Imagination heard them utter, as they ran,

Thus pass the shadowy scenes of life away!

* Psal. lxxvii. 19.

Emerging

Emerging from this fluid alley, they dart amidſt the level of a ſpacious meadow. The eye, lately *immured*, though in pleaſurable confinement, now expands her delighted view, into a ſpace almoſt boundleſs, and amidſt objects little ſhort of innumerable. Tranſported for a while, at the numberleſs variety of beauteous images, poured in ſweet confuſion all around, ſhe hardly knows where to fix, or which to purſue. Recovering, at length, from the pleaſing perplexity, ſhe glances, quick and inſtantaneous, acroſs all the intermediate plain, and marks the diſtant *mountains:* how cliffs climb over cliffs, till the huge ridges gain upon the ſky; how their diminiſhed tops are dreſſed in blue, or wrapped in clouds; while all their leafy ſtructures, and all their fleecy tenants, are loſt in air.

Soon ſhe quits theſe aereal ſummits, and ranges the ruſſet *heath:* here ſhagged with brakes, or tufted with ruſhes; there interſperſed with ſtraggling thickets, or ſolitary trees; which ſeem, like diſaffected partiſans, to ſhun each other's ſhade.—A *ſpire*, placed in a remote valley, peeps over the hills. *Senſe* is ſurpriſed at the amuſive appearance; is ready to ſuſpect, that the column riſes, like ſome inchanted edifice, from the rifted earth. But *reaſon* looks upon it, as the earneſt of a hidden vale, and the ſure indication of an adjacent town; performing, in this reſpect, much the ſame office to the eye, as *faith* executes with regard to the ſoul, when it is *the evidence of things not ſeen* *.

Next, ſhe roves, with increaſing pleaſure, over ſpacious tracts of fertile glebe, and cultured *fields;* where cattle, of every graceful form, and every valuable quality, crop the tender herb, or drink the cryſtal rills.—Anon, ſhe dwells with the utmoſt complacency, on *towns* of opulence and ſplendor; which ſpread the ſacred dome, and lift the ſocial roof: towns, no longer ſurrounded with the ſtern forbidding majeſty

* Heb. xi. 1.

jesty of unpassable intrenchments, and impregnable ramparts; but encircled with the delicate, the inviting appendages of gardens and orchards: *those*, decked with all the soft graces of art and elegance; *these*, blushing and pregnant with the more substantial treasures of fruitful nature.—Wreaths of ascending smoke, intermingled with turrets and lofty pinnacles, seem to contend which shall get *farthest* from the earth, and *nearest* to the skies. Happy for the inhabitants! if such was the habitual tendency of their desires *; if no other contention was known in their streets.

* This comparison, I think, cannot appear vulgar to those persons, who have read, and who reverence, *the book of Canticles*. There, the church, ascending continually in devout affections, to her beloved *JESUS*, and to her heavenly home, is characterized by this very similitude: *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke?* Cant. iii. 6. —Though it must be confessed, that this similitude, like many of the illustrations used in scripture, might have a sort of *local* propriety; peculiar to the people of that age, country, and religion. It might probably refer to those columns of smoke, which arose from the *burnt-offering*, or fumed from the altar of *incense*. If so, this circumstance must give a solemnity and dignity to the idea, of which many readers are not at all aware, and which indeed no modern reader can fully conceive.

May I take leave to mention another comparison of this kind? *The enemies of the LORD shall consume as the fat of lambs; yea, even as the smoke shall they consume away*, Psal. xxxvii. 20.—*As the fat of lambs*, is not to *us* a striking representation; but to those who attended the altar, who saw the unctuous and most combustible parts of the victim blazing in the sacred fire, it presented a very lively image: which was still more apposite and significant, if this *Psalm* was sung, while the sacrifice was burning.—None, I believe, in such a case, could forbear either observing or admiring the beautiful *gradation*: "They shall perish as yonder *fat*, which is so easily "set on fire; and, when once in a flame, is so speedily con- "sumed. Nay, they shall be as the *smoke*, which is still more "transient: whose light unsubstantial wreaths but just make "their appearance to the eye; and, in a moment, vanish in- "to empty air."

Villas, elegant and magnificent, ſeated in the centre of an ample park, or removed to the extremity of a lengthened lawn; not far from a beautiful reſervoir of ſtanding waters, or the more ſalutary lapſe of a limpid ſtream.—*Villages*, clad in homely thatch, and lodged in the boſom of cluſtering trees. Ruſtics, ſinging at their works; ſhepherds, tuning their pipes, as they tend their flocks; travellers, purſuing each his reſpective way, in eaſy and joyous ſecurity.

How pleaſing, ſaid *Aſpaſio*, is *our* ſituation! How delightful is the aſpect of all things! One would almoſt imagine, that nothing could exceed it, and that nothing can increaſe it. Yet there is a method of *increaſing* even this copious delight, and of *heightening* even this exquiſite pleaſure.—Let me deſire my friend, anſwered *Theron*, to explain his remark; and not only to explain, but to exemplify.—If we view, reſumed *Aſpaſio*, our own *proſperous*, and compare it with the *afflicted* condition of others, the method I propoſe, will be reduced to practice. Such a dark and mournful contraſt muſt throw additional brightneſs, even upon the brighteſt ſcene.

Above, the ſkies ſmile with ſerenity; below, the fields look gay with plenty; all around, the ſportive gales,

> *Fanning their odoriferous wings, diſpenſe*
> *Native perfumes; and whiſper, whence they ſtole*
> *Thoſe balmy ſpoils* *.

With us all circumſtances are as *eaſy*, as the wafture of the boat; as *ſmooth*, as the flow of the ſtream.—But let us not forget thoſe grievous calamities, which befal our brethren, in ſome remote tracts of the earth, or diſtant parts of the ocean. How many ſailors are ſtruggling, vainly ſtruggling, with all the fury of rending winds, and daſhing waves! while their veſſel, flung to and fro, by *tempeſtuous* billows, is mounted

* MILTON, book IV.

mounted into the clouds, or plunged in the abyſs. Poſſibly, the miſerable crew hear their knell ſounded in the ſhattered maſt, and ſee deſtruction entering at the burſting planks. Perhaps, this very moment, they pour the laſt, diſmal, dying ſhriek; and ſink, irrecoverably ſink, in the all-overwhelming ſurge.—The traveller, in *Africa*'s barren waſtes, pale even amidſt theſe glowing regions, pale with prodigious conſternation, ſees ſudden and ſurpriſing mountains riſe; ſees the ſultry deſert, aſcending the ſky, and ſweeping before the whirlwind. What can he do? whither fly? how eſcape the approaching ruin? Alas! while he attempts to rally his thoughts, attempts to deviſe ſome feeble expedient, he is overtaken by the choking ſtorm, and ſuffocated amidſt the *ſandy inundation*. The driving heaps are, now, his executioner; as the drifted heaps, will, ſoon, be his tomb.

While *we* poſſeſs the valuable privileges, and taſte the delicious ſweets of *liberty*, how many partakers of our common nature are condemned to perpetual exile, or chained to the oar for life! How many are immured in the gloom of dungeons, or buried in the caverns of the mines, never to behold the all-enlivening ſun again!—While reſpect waits upon our perſons, and reputation attends our characters; are there not ſome unhappy creatures, led forth by the hand of *vindictive juſtice*, to be ſpectacles of horror, and monuments of vengeance? ſentenced, for their enormous crimes, to be broke limb by limb on the wheel, or to be impaled alive on the lingering ſtake. To theſe, the ſtrangling cord, or the deadly ſtab, would be a moſt welcome favour. But they muſt feel a *thouſand* deaths, in undergoing *one*. And this, too probably, is but the beginning of their ſorrows; will only conſign them over to infinitely more terrible torment.

While eaſe and pleaſure, in ſweet conjunction, ſmooth our paths, and ſoften our couch; how many are toſſing on the fever's fiery bed, or toiling along affliction's

tion's thorny road! Some under the *excruciating*, but neceſſary operations of ſurgery: their bodies ripped open, with a dreadful inciſion, to ſearch for the torturing ſtone; or their limbs lopt off by the bloody knife, to prevent the mortification's fatal ſpread. Some *emaciated* by pining ſickneſs, are deprived of all their animal vigour; and transformed into ſpectres, even before their diſſolution *. Theſe are ready to adopt the complaint of the *Pſalmiſt; I am withered like graſs; my bones are burnt up, as it were a firebrand; I go hence like the ſhadow that departeth.* While *health*, that ſtaple bleſſing; which gives every other entertainment its flavour and its beauty; adds the gloſs to all we ſee, and the gout to all we taſte; health plays at our hearts; dances in our ſpirits; and mantles in our cheeks, as the generous champain lately ſparkled in our glaſs.

We are bleſſed with a calm poſſeſſion of ourſelves; with tranquillity in our conſciences, and an habitual harmony in our temper. Whereas many, in the doleful *cells* of *lunacy*, are gnaſhing their teeth or wringing their hands; rending the air with volleys of horrid execrations, or burdening it with peals of diſconſolate ſighs. And O! what multitudes, even amidſt courts and palaces, are held in *ſplendid vaſſalage*, by their own domineering paſſions, or the vanities of a bewitching world! Far leſs innocently, far more deplorably diſordered†, than the fettered madman, they are gnawed by the envenomed tooth of envy; they are agitated

* A very little excurſion of thought will eaſily convince the reader, that there is no period of time, in which ſome of theſe calamities do not befal our fellow-creatures, in one part of the world or another.

† *Give me any plague*, ſays an apocryphal writer, *but the plague of the heart*, Ecclus xxv. 13. Upon which judicious and weighty apophthegm, *Maſiniſſa's* ſpeech in Mr *Thomſon's Sophoniſba*, is a very pertinent and affecting paraphraſe.

"O! ſave me from the tumult of the ſoul!

"From

agitated by the wild ſallies of ambition; or feel the malignant ulcer of jealouſy, rankling in their breaſts. In ſome, avarice, like a ravening harpy, gripes. In ſome, revenge, like an implacable fury, rages. While others are goaded by lordly and imperious luſts, thro' the loathſome *ſewers* of impure delight; and left, at laſt, in thoſe hated and execrable *dens*, where remorſe rears her ſnaky creſt, and infamy ſharpens her hiſſing tongue. —— —— —— —— ——

Why this long pauſe? replied *Theron*. Your obſervations are as uſeful, as they are juſt. We ſhould all be acquainted, at leaſt in ſpeculation acquainted with grief; and ſend our thoughts, if not our feet, to viſit the abodes of ſorrow:—that, in this ſchool, we may learn a ſympathiſing pity for our diſtreſſed fellow-creatures; and ſee, in this glaſs, our inexpreſſible obligations to the diſtinguiſhing goodneſs of Providence; which has crowned our table with abundance, and repleniſhed our cup with delicacies; permitting neither penury to ſtint the draught, nor adverſity to mingle her gall.—Go on, I muſt intreat you, with your deſcription of *comparative felicity*. We have a large circuit ſtill to make, before we arrive at our intended port. And I could wiſh, that your diſcourſe might keep pace with the current.

Since you approve the ſubject, anſwered *Aſpaſio*, I will purſue it a little farther.—We, the inhabitants of this favoured iſle, breathe an air of the moſt *agreeable* temperature, and moſt *wholeſome* qualities. But how many nations languiſh under brazen ſkies, vaulted as it

" From the wild beaſt within!—For circling ſands,
" When the ſwift whirlwind whelms them o'er the lands;
" The roaring deeps, that to the clouds ariſe,
" While thwarting thick the mingled lightning flies;
" The monſter brood, to which this land gives birth,
" The blazing city, and the gaping earth;
" All deaths, all tortures in one pang combin'd,
" Are *gentle* to the tempeſt of the mind.

it were with fire? They welter amidst those furnaces of the sun, till their "visage is burnt, and black as a "coal *."—What is far more disastrous, beds of sulphur and combustible materials lie in subterraneous ambush, ready to spring the *irresistible mine;* ere long,—perhaps, on some day of universal festivity †, or in some night of deep repose,—to be touched by heaven's avenging hand.—Then with what outrageous violence will they burst! rock the foundations of nature! wrench open the ponderous jaws of earth! and swallow up astonished cities, in the dark, tremendous, closing chasm!

These *earthquakes*, it may be, both precede and portend, *the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth at noon-day* ‡. They are, at once, a fearful omen, and a ruinous blow. The stagnating atmosphere, rank with malignant vapours, becomes a source of deadly infection; or, replete with poisonous animalcules, is one vast incumbent cloud of *living bane*. If the active gales arise, they arise only to stir the seeds of disease, and diffuse the fatal

* Lam. iv. 8.

† There is a remarkable passage in *Psal.* lviii. 9. which seems to denote some such *unexpected*, but *speedy* and *inevitable* doom. The sense is darkened, not a little, by the version admitted into our liturgy. I believe, the true translation may be seen in the following *Italics*, and the true meaning learned from the *interwoven* paraphrase.—Speedily, or *before your pots can perceive the* warmth of blazing *thorns, shall HE* that ruleth over all, sweep away the wicked: *sweep him away by* a stroke of righteous *indignation*, as by a fierce and mighty tempest; so that, *even from* the fulness of his sufficiency, and the height of his *prosperity*, he shall be plunged into utter destruction.—The word חי, which is very unhappily rendered *raw*, signifies a state of *prosperity*, or *pleasurable enjoyment*. 1 Sam. xxv. 6.—The whole verse, in a gradation of striking images, gives us a most awful display of divine vengeance: vengeance quite sudden; utterly irresistible; and overtaking the secure sinner, amidst all the caresses of, what the world calls, *fortune*.

‡ Psal. xci. 6.

fatal contagion far and near.—Unhappy people! The *Plague*, that ſevere miniſter of divine indignation, fixes her head-quarters in their blaſted provinces; and ſends death abroad, on his pale horſe *, to empty their houſes, depopulate their towns, and croud their graves.

Our iſland is ſeldom viſited with either of theſe dreadful judgments; and has never ſuſtained any very conſiderable calamity from the former. However, let us not be preſumptuouſly ſecure. We have, not long ago, received an awful warning. The rod has been ſhaken, or rather the ſword has been brandiſhed, over our territories.—Who can forget the general conſternation, which ſeized our *metropolis*, on occaſion of the late earthquake? And not without reaſon. For, of all divine viſitations, this is the moſt terribly vindictive. The whirlwind is *ſlow* in its progreſs; war is *gentle* in its aſſaults; even the raging peſtilence is a *mild* rebuke; compared with the inevitable, the *all-overwhelming* fury of an earthquake. When it begins, it alſo makes an end †; puts a period, in a few minutes, to the work of ages, ruins all, without diſtinction; and there is no defence from the deſtructive ſtroke.

Should almighty vengeance ſtir up again thoſe fierce ſubterranean commotions; ſhould the moſt high GOD bid ſtrong convulſions tear the bowels of nature, and make the foundations of the world tremble like a leaf: what, *O ye careleſs ones* ‡, what will you do? whither will you fly?—See! the pavement ſinks under your feet. Your houſes are tottering over your heads. The ground, on every ſide, cracks and opens like a gaping grave; or heaves and ſwells like a rolling ſea. *A noiſe of craſhing* ‖ is heard from without, occaſioned by the rending ſtreets, and falling ſtructures.

* Rev. vi. 8.
† 1 Sam. iii. 12.
‡ If. xxxii. 11.
‖ Zeph. i. 10.

tures. Thunders, infernal thunders *, bellow from beneath; mingled with despairing shrieks, and dying groans from those wretched creatures, who are jammed between the closing earth, or going down alive into the horrible pit †.—Where now will you fly? To

* Before the overthrow of *Catania* by an earthquake, a noise was heard, vast and horrid, as if all the artillery in the world was discharged at once.

† Very memorable, and equally tremendous, is the account of the earthquake, that visited *Sicily*, in the year 1693.—It shook the whole island. The mischief it caused, is amazing. Fifty-four cities and towns, beside an incredible number of villages, were either demolished, or greatly damaged. *Catania*, one of the most famous and flourishing cities in the kingdom, was entirely destroyed. Of 18,914 inhabitants, 18,000 perished.

Another earthquake almost as dreadful, and in the same year, spread desolation through the colony of *Jamaica*. In two minutes time, it shook down, and laid under water, nine tenths of the town of *Port-Royal*. In less than a minute, three quarters of the houses, and the ground they stood on, together with the inhabitants, were quite sunk; and the little part left behind, was no better than heaps of rubbish.—The shake was so violent, that it threw people down upon their knees, or their faces, as they were running about for shelter. The ground heaved and swelled, like a rolling sea; and several houses, still standing, were shuffled some yards out of their places. The earth would crack and yawn; would open and shut, quick and fast. Of which horrid openings, two or three hundred might be seen at once. In some whereof, the people went down, and were seen no more. In some they descended, and rose again in other streets, or in the middle of the harbour. Some swiftly closing, seized the miserable creatures, and pressed them to death; leaving their heads, or half their bodies above ground, to be a spectacle of terror, and a prey to dogs. Out of others would issue whole rivers of water, spouted to a great height in the air, and threatening a deluge to that part, which the earthquake spared.—Scarce a planting-house or sugar-work was left standing in all the island. Two thousand lives were lost, and a thousand acres of land sunk. The whole was attended with frightful noises, with brimstone blasts, and offensive smells. The noisome vapours belched forth, corrupted

To your ſtrong towers? They are ſhattered in pieces.—To the ſtronger rocks? They are thrown out of their place.—To the open fields? They are a frightful gulf, yawning to devour you.—Where-ever you fly; in the wildneſs of your diſtraction, where ever you ſeek for ſhelter; it ſhall be, *as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the houſe, and leaned his hand upon the wall, and a ſerpent bit him* *.

Yet there is *one* place of refuge, which will prove an inviolable ſanctuary, and a perfect ſecurity. I mean, the great, the gracious, the adorable REDEEMER's righteouſneſs. Hither let us betake ourſelves. Now, before the day of diſſolution cometh, let us betake ourſelves to *this ſtrong-hold*. Then ſhall we have no reaſon to fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midſt of the ſea. For thus ſaith GOD, the omnipotent and faithful GOD; *The ſun and the moon ſhall be darkened, and the ſtars ſhall withdraw their ſhining. The LORD alſo ſhall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jeruſalem. The heavens and the earth ſhall ſhake; but the LORD JESUS CHRIST will be the hope of his people, and the ſtrength of the children of Iſrael* †.—Or, if the true believer is involved in the ſame undiſtinguiſhed ruin with the ungodly; even this ſhall turn to his gain. It ſhall exempt him from the lingering pains, and the melancholy ſolemnities of a dying bed. Like *Elijah's* fiery chariot, it ſhall ſpeedily waft his ſoul to the boſom of his SAVIOUR. While the hideous cavern, that whelms his body in the centre, ſhall be its chamber of reſt, till the beloved BRIDEGROOM comes, and the day of reſurrection dawns.

We

corrupted the air, and brought on a general ſickneſs; which ſwept away more than three thouſand of thoſe who eſcaped the fury of the earthquake. *See* CHAMB. *Dict.* on the word *earthquake*.

* Amos v. 19. † Joel iii. 15, 16.

We lift up our eyes, and behold the radiant colours, which flush the forehead of the morning: we turn, and gaze upon the no less beautiful tinges, which impurple the cheek of evening. We throw around our view, and are delighted with numberless forms of fertility, which both decorate and enrich our plains.—Whereas, other countries are over-run with immense swarms of *locusts*: which intercept, where-ever they fly, the fair face of day; and destroy, where-ever they alight, the green treasures of the ground.

Ah! what avails it, that the laborious hind sows his acres, or the skilful husbandman prunes his vineyard? that Spring, with her prolific moisture, swells the bud; or, with her delicate pencil, paints the blossom? Nor grain, nor fruit, can hope for maturity, while these *rapacious* and *baleful* creatures infest the neighbourhood. They ravage the gardens. They strip the trees, and shave the meadows. Scarce a single leaf remains on the boughs, or so much as a single stalk in the furrows. *A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing can escape them* *.

Now, let the dreadful artillery roar from all its iron throats, and disgorge the heaviest glut of mortal hail. Now, ye sons of slaughter, men *skilful to destroy* †, now hurl the sulphureous globes, which kindle into a hurricane of fire, and burst in ragged instruments of ruin.—To no purpose. The linked thunderbolts are turned

* *A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth*, Joel ii. 3. This is one of those *bold* and *expressive* metaphors, in which the *Hebrew* language delights, and by which it is eminently distinguished. It signifies a *total devastation* of the vegetable produce; such as must ensue, if a raging and resistless fire attended the progress of these pernicious animals; burning with such vehement impetuosity, that none could quench it; spreading such extensive havock, that nothing could escape it.

† Ezek. xxi. 31.

turned into ſtubble, the burſting bombs are accounted as ſtraw. Theſe armies of the air laugh at all the formidable preparations of war; *and when they fall on the ſword, they ſhall not be wounded* *.—Surpriſing and awful deſtination of the everlaſting GOD! at once, to ſtain the pride, and chaſtiſe the guilt of man! Theſe are a deſpicable and puny race; clad in no coat of mail, but cruſhed by the ſlighteſt touch. They wear neither ſword, nor ſcymitar, nor any offenſive weapon. Yet, in ſpite of oppoſing legions, they carry on their depredations, and puſh their conqueſts. *Terror* marches in their front, and *Famine* brings up the rear. They ſpread univerſal devaſtation, as they advance; and frequently give the ſignal for the Peſtilence to follow. Potent armies loſe their hands, and haughty tyrants tremble for their dominions.

O! that the natives of *Great Britain* would bethink themſelves! would break off their ſins by righteouſneſs, and their iniquities by cheriſhing the influences of the divine SPIRIT! leſt this *overflowing ſcourge*†, under

* The prophet Joel, foretelling the plague of *locuſts*, gives, under the image of an *embattled hoſt*, a moſt alarming diſplay of their terrible appearance; their impetuous progreſs; the horrible dread they raiſe, as they advance; and the irreparable miſchief they leave, as they depart: adding, among other amazing circumſtances, *When they fall upon the ſword, they ſhall not be wounded.* Which implies, I apprehend, that no method of ſlaughter ſhould prove deſtructive to their troops; or, that every expedient, contrived for their ſuppreſſion, ſhould be utterly baffled: being, through their immenſe numbers, as *invincible*, as if every one was abſolutely *invulnerable*. For, though millions and millions ſhould periſh by the weapons of war; even ſuch a blow, in reference to their whole *collective* body, ſhould ſcarce be perceived as a loſs, ſcarce be felt as a wound; neither diminiſhing their ſtrength, nor retarding their march. *Joel* ii. 8.

† *Overflowing ſcourge*, Iſa. xxviii. 15. It is the property of a ſcourge to *laſh*, of a river to *overflow*. The ſacred writer, (by an elegant παρονομασια, which beautifies the original, but cannot

under which some neighbouring kingdoms have severely smarted, should be commissioned to visit *our* borders, and avenge the quarrel of its MAKER's honour.—Distant as those countless legions are, with interposing seas between; yet, if GOD lift up a standard from far, or but hiss * unto them from the ends of the earth, *they come with speed swiftly.*—Who will convey this wish to the ears, who will transmit it to the hearts of my countrymen? that our land may always appear, as it does at present, like the darling of Providence; may always resound with the voice of joy, and be filled with the fruits of plenty; may always wear the robe of beauty, and be adorned with the smile of peace.

How

cannot be preserved in the translation,) has connected these different ideas and different effects. The vindictive visitation, with which he threatens the disobedient Jews, shall *pierce deep* as a scourge, and *spread wide* as an inundation. They shall feel it to their very souls; and it shall involve the whole nation in misery, anguish, and ruin.

There seems to be such a form of expression in the service of our church; when we pray, in behalf of our fellow-Christians; "*Pour* upon them the continual *dew* of thy blessing:" that which may be refreshing and salutary as the dew, yet copious and abundant as the shower.

* *Hiss unto them*, Isa. v. 26. With great significancy, and peculiar grandeur, the prophet applies this expression to the LORD GOD of hosts, influencing the most powerful armies; *q. d.* "They come, without a moment's delay, and "from the remotest regions of the earth, to execute all his "pleasure. Formidable and innumerable as they are, they "come,—I say not, upon his repeated injunctions, or at his "strict command,—but at the first, the very *smallest* intima-"tion of his will;"—such as the shepherds used to their flocks; such as the bee-men, of old, to their swarms; or such as we, in these days, to some of our domestic animals.—The Hebrew שרק I would not translate, *at his whistle;* because this phrase, in our language, creates a vulgar sound, and conveys a low idea: but such is the import of the original; which denotes all that *unconcerned ease* of action, without any of the *offensive familiarity* of diction.

How great are the advantages of *peace!* said *Theron.* Peace at her leisure plans, and leads out industry to execute, all the noble and commodious improvements, which we behold on every side. Peace sets the mark of property on our possessions, and bids justice guarantee them to our enjoyment. Peace spreads over us the banner of the laws, while we taste, free from outrage, and secure from injury, the milk and honey of our honest toil *.—Amidst the tumultuous confusions of *war*, who could have a heart to contrive, or a hand to accomplish, any such works of dignity and use? In those days of darkness and distraction, how languid to the sight are all the dewy landscapes of spring? How insipid to the taste are all the delicious flavours of autumn?—When the nation is overrun with armies, and embroiled in slaughter, *a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind* †, are the dismal distinction of the times. Instead of a calm acquiescence in our portion, our very life hangs in continual suspense.

But what are all the benefits of *external* peace, tho' displayed in the fairest light, and enlivened by the

* *Pax optima rerum*, says the *Latin* Poet.—But the *Orientals*, I think, discover the most superlative esteem for this blessing, by making it the constant form of their salutations, and the subject of their most cordial wishes for their friends; PEACE BE UNTO THEE.—In this *short sentence*, they seem to have comprised a *whole volume* of mercies: meaning, by their single wish all that the *Greeks* expressed by their χαιρειν, ὑγιαινειν, εὐπραττειν; i. e. a confluence of that joy of mind, that health of body, that prosperity of outward circumstances, which *complete* the happiness of mankind.

We have a fine description of peace, and its various blessings, 1 *Maccab.* xiv. 8, 9, &c. The picture is very exact, tho' perfectly artless. Nothing should hinder me from transcribing the passage, but a fear of being too *diffusive* in my notes. Lest the reader, who expects a *treat*, should complain of a *glut*; or have reason to object, that the side-board is more copiously furnished than the table.

† Deut. xxviii. 65.

the ſtrongeſt contraſts.—What are they all, compared with the bleſſings of the goſpel? by which ſinners may have *peace with GOD thro' JESUS CHRIST our LORD.*

This, reſumed *Aſpaſio*, ſuggeſts a freſh inſtance of happineſs, which others want, and *we* poſſeſs; an inſtance never to be omitted in our catalogue of peculiar mercies; I might add, never to be forgotten, by any *Chriſtian*, on any occaſion.—While many kingdoms of the earth are ignorant of the true GOD, and know neither the principles of piety, nor the paths of felicity; *the day-ſpring from on high hath viſited us, to give the knowledge of ſalvation, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.*—While millions of *rebellious angels*, caſt from their native thrones, are reſerved in chains of darkneſs, unto the judgment of the great day; we, tho' rebellious and apoſtate ſinners of mankind, are delivered from the wrath to come. The holy *JESUS* (bleſſed be his redeeming goodneſs!) has endured the croſs, and deſpiſed the ſhame, on purpoſe to reſcue us from thoſe doleful and ignominious dungeons; where the priſoners of almighty vengeance

——*Converſe with groans,*
Unreſpited, unpitied, unrepriev'd,
Ages of hopeleſs end *.

Yes, my dear *Theron;* let me repeat your own important words; "What are all the benefits of exter-"nal peace, though diſplayed in the faireſt light, and "enlivened by the ſtrongeſt contraſts;—what are they "all, compared with the *bleſſings* of the *goſpel?*"—This brings the olive-branch from heaven, and glad tidings of reconciliation with our offended GOD. This compoſes the tumult of the mind; diſarms the warring paſſions; and regulates the extravagant deſires. This introduces ſuch an integrity of heart, and benevolence of temper, as conſtitute the health of the ſoul.

* MILTON.

ſoul. This ſpreads ſuch an uniform beauty of holineſs through the conduct, as is far more amiable than the moſt engaging forms of material nature.

O! that thou wouldſt bow the heavens! that thou wouldſt come down, *celeſtial VISITANT;* and make thy ſtated, thy favourite abode in our iſle! that every breaſt may be animated with thy power; and every community, every individual, may wear thy reſplendent badge!—Then ſhall it be the *leaſt* ingredient of our public felicity, that the ſword of ſlaughter is beaten into a plough-ſhare, and the once bloody ſpear bent into a pruning-hook. It ſhall be the *loweſt* upon the liſt of our common bleſſings, that *violence is no more heard in our land, waſting and deſtruction within our borders. Our* very *officers will be peace, and our exactors* * *righteouſneſs. We ſhall call* (and the event will correſpond with the name) *our walls ſalvation, and our gates praiſe.* Then ſhall every harp be taken down from the willows, and every voice burſt into a ſong. —"In other climes"—will be the general acclamation—

"In other climes, let myriads of curious *inſects*
"ſpin the delicate thread, which ſoftens into velvet,
"ſtiffens into brocade, or flows in gloſſy ſattin; which
"reflects

* If. lx. 17. *Officers* and *exactors* ſignify perſons veſted with public authority; who have it in their power to rule with rigour. But theſe, inſtead of abuſing their power, ſhall conduct the adminiſtration with all poſſible equity and gentleneſs; with a *parental* tenderneſs, rather than a *magiſterial* auſterity. So that, though the title and office of an exactor may remain; nothing of the domineering inſolence, or oppreſſive ſeverity, ſhall continue.—The prophet, who always delivers his ſentiments with the utmoſt emphaſis, ſays, They ſhall be, not barely *peaceable* and *righteous*, but poſſeſſed of theſe qualities in the higheſt degree. Or, which implies more, than any other words can expreſs, they ſhall be *peace* and *righteouſneſs* itſelf. —The ſame beautiful figure is uſed in the next clauſe, which deſcribes the inviolable *ſecurity* of the city, together with the univerſal both *joy* and *piety* of the inhabitants.

" reflects a lovelier glow on the cheek of beauty, and " renders royalty itself more majestic. We are pre- " sented with infinitely-*finer robes*, in the imputed " righteousness of our REDEEMER, and the inhe- " rent sanctification of his SPIRIT; which beautify " the very soul, and prepare it for the illustrious as- " sembly—of saints in light,—of angels in glory.

" Let eastern rocks sparkle with diamonds, and give " birth to gems of every dazzling tincture. We have " hid in the field of our scriptures, the *Pearl* of great " *price;* the *white* and precious *stone* * of perfect ab- " solution; a diadem, which will shine with undimi- " nished lustre, when all the brilliant wonders of the " mine are faded, extinguished, lost.

" Let richer soils nourish the noblest plants, and " warmer suns concoct their exquisite juices; the le- " mon, pleasingly poignant; the citron, more mild- " ly delicious; or that pride of vegetable life, and " compendium of all the blandishments of taste, the " pine-apple. We enjoy far more exalted dainties, " in having access to the *Tree of life*, *whose leaves are* " *for the healing of the nations* †; whose boughs are " replenished with a never-failing abundance of hea- " venly fruits; and the nutriment they dispense, is " bliss and immortality.

" Let *Iberian* vines swell the transluent cluster, and " burst into a flood of generous wine: let the *Tuscan* " olive extract the fatness of the earth, and melt in- " to a soft mellifluous stream. We shall neither envy, " nor covet these inferior gifts, so long as we may " draw water out of the wells of salvation: so long " as we may receive that *unction from the HOLY* " *ONE* ‡, those influences of the COMFORTER, " which not only make a chearful countenance, but " gladden the very heart; imparting such a *refined* " satisfaction, as the whole world cannot give; such

" a

* Rev. ii. 17. † Rev. xxii. 2. ‡ 1 John ii. 20.

" a *permanent* ſatisfaction, as no calamities can take " away.

" Let *Ethiopian* mountains be ribbed with marble, " and *Peruvian* mines embowelled with gold. We " want neither the impenetrable quarry, nor the glit- " tering ore; having, in our adored MESSIAH, " a ſure *foundation* for all our eternal hopes, and an " inexhauſtible *fund* of the divineſt riches.

" Be it ſo, that our *Iſis* is but a creeping drop; and " the *Thames* itſelf no more than a ſcanty rivulet; " compared with the magnificent ſweep of the *Gan-* " *ges*, or the ſtupendous amplitude of *Rio de la Pla-* " *ta**. The wretched natives, even on the banks of " thoſe ſtately rivers, are at a diſtance from all the " ſprings of true conſolation. Whereas we have a " fountain, we have a river, that iſſues from the o- " cean of eternal love. With incomparable dignity, " and with equal propriety, it is ſtyled *the river of* " *life*†. It viſits the houſe of the mourner, and re- " vives the ſpirit of the ſorrowful. It makes glad " the city, and makes happy the ſervants of our " GOD. It quickens even the dead; and every hu- " man creature, that drinks of its water, lives for e- " ver.

" Let

* This river is near two hundred miles broad, where it diſcharges itſelf into the ſea. It pours ſuch an immenſe quantity of the liquid element into the *Atlantic* ocean, that freſh water may be taken up for the ſpace of many a league. It continues thus *amazingly vaſt* through a courſe of ſix hundred miles; when it divides into two mighty branches, the *Parana* and the *Paraguay*: which, having run in ſeparate channels, ſeveral thouſand miles along the country, unite at laſt; and form, by their conflux, this magnificent and ſpacious ſtream; which is ſuppoſed to be the very largeſt in the world.—To conceive a proper idea of its prodigious dimenſions, we may imagine a current of waters, taking its riſe beyond *Jeruſalem*; and, after having received all the rivers of *Europe* into its capacious bed, making its entry on the *Britiſh* ocean, by a mouth extended from *Dover* to *Briſtol*.

† Rev. xxii. 1.

" Let *Aſiatic* iſlands boaſt their mountains of myrrh, " and hills of frankincenſe: let *Arabian* groves, with " a ſuperior liberality, diſtil their healing gums; and " ripen, for vigorous operation, their vital drugs. " We have a *more ſovereign* remedy, than their moſt " powerful reſtoratives, in the great MEDIA- " TOR's atoning blood. We have a *more refreſhing* " banquet, than all their mingled ſweets, in commemo- " morating his paſſion, and participating his merits.

" In ſhort, we have an equivalent, far more than " an equivalent, for all thoſe choice productions, " which bloom in the gardens, or baſk in the orchards " of the ſun. We have a goſpel, rich in precious pri- " vileges, and abounding with ineſtimable promiſes: " we have a SAVIOUR, full of *forgiving goodneſs*, " and liberal of *renewing grace*. At whoſe auſpicious " approach, fountains ſpout amidſt the burning de- " ſert; under whoſe welcome footſteps, the ſandy " waſte ſmiles with herbage; and beneath his potent " touch, *the wilderneſs buds and bloſſoms as a roſe**. " Or, to ſpeak more plainly, the deſolate and barren " ſoul brings forth thoſe fruits of the SPIRIT, " which are infinitely more ornamental than the ſilk- " en gems of ſpring; infinitely more beneficial than " the ſalubrious ſtores of autumn.

" We have a SAVIOUR,—tell it out among the " Heathen, that all the nations on earth may partake " of the gift, and join in the ſong,—a SAVIOUR " we have, whoſe radiant eye brightens the gloomy " paths of affliction; whoſe efficacious bleſſing makes " *all things work together for the good*† of his people. " Death, gilded by his propitious ſmile, even death " itſelf looks gay. Nor is the grave under his be- " nign adminiſtration, any longer a den of deſtruc- " tion; but a ſhort and ſhady avenue to thoſe im- " mortal manſions; whoſe *foundations are laid with* " *ſapphires; whoſe windows are of agate; the gates*

" *of*

* Iſ. xxxv. 1. † Rom. viii. 28.

" *of carbuncle; and all the borders of pleaſant ſtones* ‡."

Pardon my rhapſody, dear *Theron*. Your own remark, added to the grand and lovely views, have warmed, have animated, have almoſt tranſported me. —*Theron* anſwered not a word; but ſeemed fixed in thought.—While he is indulging his contemplation, we may juſt obſerve ſome other peculiarities of the proſpect.

Here and there, a loneſome *cottage* ſcarcely lifts its humble head. No pompous ſwell of projecting ſteps ſurrounds the door; no appendent wings of inferior offices ſkirt the edifice; no ſtately hall, ſlabbed with marble, and roofed with ſculpture, receives the gazing ſtranger. But young-eyed Health, and white-robed Innocence, with ſweet-featured Contentment, adorn the habitation. While Virtue lends her graces, and Religion communicates her honours, to dignify the abode; rendering the blameleſs but ſuperior, in *real* majeſty, to a diſſolute court.

At ſome diſtance, appear the hoary remains of an ancient *monaſtery*. Sunk beneath the weight of revolving years, the once venerable fabric is levelled with the duſt. The lofty and ornamented temple lies rudely overgrown with moſs, or ſtill more ignobly covered with weeds. The walls, where ſainted imagery ſtood, or *idolized* painting ſhone, are claſped with twining ivy, or ſhagged with horrid thorn.—Thro' iſles, that once echoed to the chantor's voice, mingled with the organ's majeſtic ſound, the hollow winds roar, and the daſhing ſtorm drives. Where are, now, the ſilent cells, the vocal choirs, the duſky groves, in which the *romantic* ſaints prolonged their lonely vigils, by the midnight-taper; or poured their united prayers, before the lark had waked the morn, or ſtrolled, in ever-muſing melancholy, along the moon-light glade. —Surely, thoſe mouldering fragments now teach, (and with

‡ Iſ. liv. 11, 12.

with a much better grace, with a much ſtronger emphaſis,) what formerly their unſocial and gloomy reſidentiaries profeſſed. They teach the *vanity* of the world, and the *tranſitory* duration of all that is moſt ſtable, in this region of ſhadows.

Behold, on yonder eminence, the rueful memorials of a magnificent *caſtle*. All diſmantled, and quite demoliſhed, it gives a ſhading of ſolemnity to the more lively parts of nature's picture; and attempers the rural delight, with ſome touches of alarming dread.—*War*, deſtructive *war*, has ſnatched the ſythe from the hand of time, and hurried on the ſteps of deſtiny. Thoſe broken columns, and battered walls; thoſe proſtrate towers, and battlements daſhed to the ground, carry evident marks of an immature downfal. They were built for ages, and for ages might have ſtood, a defence and accommodation to generations yet unborn, if haply they had eſcaped the dire aſſaults of hoſtile rage.—But what vigilance of man can prevent the miner's dark approach? or what ſolidity of bulwark can withſtand the bellowing engine's impetuous ſhock?

Thoſe, perhaps, were the rooms, in which *licentious* Mirth crowned with roſes the ſparkling bowl, and tuned to the ſilver-ſounding lute the ſyren's inchanting ſong. Thoſe, the ſcenes of voluptuous indulgence, where Luxury poured her delicacies; where Beauty, inſidious Beauty, practiſed her wiles; and ſpread, with bewitching art, her wanton ſnares.—Now, inſtead of the riotous banquet, and intrigues of lawleſs love, the owl utters her hated ſcreams by night, and the raven flaps her ominous wing by day.—Where are the violet-couches, and the woodbine-bowers, which fanned, with their breathing ſweets, the polluted flame? The ſoil ſeems to ſuffer for the abuſes of the owner. Blaſted and diſhonoured, it produces nothing but ragged briers, and noiſome nettles; under whoſe odious covert, the hiſſing ſnake glides, or the croaking toad crawls.—Fearful intima-

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tion of that *ignominious* and *doleful* cataſtrophe, which awaits the ſons of riot! when their momentary gratifications will drop, like the faded leaf; and leave nothing behind, but pangs of remorſe, keener far than the pointed thorn, and more envenomed than the viper's tooth.

Perhaps, they were the beauteous and honoured abodes, where *Grandeur* and *Politeneſs* walked their daily round, attended with a train of guiltleſs delights: where amiable and refined *Friendſhip* was wont to ſit and ſmile, looking love, and talking the very ſoul: where Hoſpitality, with Oeconomy always at her ſide, ſtood beckoning to the *diſtreſſed*, but *induſtrious* * poor; and

* I ſay diſtreſſed, but *induſtrious* poor;—becauſe I would not be underſtood as encouraging, in any degree, the relief of our *common beggars*.—Towards the former, I would cultivate a tender and ever-yearning compaſſion; I would anticipate their complaints; and as a ſacred writer directs, would even SEEK *to do them good*.—But as to the latter, I frankly own, that I look upon it as my duty, to diſcourage ſuch cumberers of the ground. They are, generally ſpeaking, luſty drones; and their habitual *begging* is no better than a ſpecious *robbing* of the public hive. For ſuch *ſturdy* ſupplicants, who are able to undergo the fatigue of travelling; able to endure the inclemencies of the weather; and conſequently much more able, were they equally willing, to exerciſe themſelves in ſome ſpecies of laudable induſtry;—for theſe, the *houſe* of *correction* would be a far more ſalutary proviſion, than any ſupply from our table; and *confinement to labour*, a much more beneficial charity, than the liberality of the purſe.

We ſhould remember, and *they* ſhould be taught, that the law ordained by the court of heaven, is, *If a man will not work, neither ſhall he eat*. If then we contribute to ſupport them in idleneſs, do we not *counteract* and fruſtrate this wiſe regulation, eſtabliſhed by the great SOVEREIGN of the univerſe?—Is it not alſo a *wrong* to the deſerving poor, if we ſuffer theſe wens on the body politic to draw off the nouriſhment, which ought to circulate amongſt the valuable and uſeful members?—Money or victuals beſtowed on theſe worthleſs wretches, is not real beneficence, but the *earneſt-penny* of ſloth.

It

and showered blessings from her liberal hand.—But war, detested war, has stretched over the social and inviting seat, *the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness* *. Now, alas! nothing but desolation and horror haunt the savage retreat. The ample arches of the bridge, which so often transmitted the wondering passenger along their pensile way, lie buried in the dreary moat.—Those relics of the massy portals, naked and abandoned, seem to bemoan their melancholy condition.

No

It hires them, to be good for nothing; and pays them, for being public nuisances.

Let us then unanimously join, to shake off these *dead weights* from our wheels, and dislodge these *swarms* of *vermin* from our state. Let us be deaf to their most importunate clamours; and assure ourselves, that, by this determined inflexibility, we do GOD, we do our *community*, we do *them*, the most substantial service.—Should they implore by the *injured* name of *JESUS*; for the honour of the *LORD JESUS*, let us resolutely with-hold our alms. Their meaning is,—"I cannot go on in my present shameful and iniquitous course; I can no longer continue to act the "*wicked and slothful servant*; unless you will administer some "kindly pernicious assistance. For *CHRIST*'s sake, therefore, assist me to dishonour my Christian name, and to live "more infamously than the vilest beasts. For *CHRIST*'s "sake, help me to be a reproach and burden to my native "country; and to persist in the way which leads to eternal "destruction."—This is the *true import* of their petitions. And whether the sanction of that most venerable name, added to *such* a request, should move our commiseration, or excite our abhorrence, let every thinking person judge.

I trust, the reader will be so candid, as to excuse this long digressive note; and do me the justice to believe, that I am not pleading against, but for the *real* poor; not to *harden* any one's heart, but rather to *direct* every one's hand—Give, out of gratitude to *CHRIST*, out of compassion to the needy, and be for ever blessed: but give not to incorrigible vagrants; to maintain impiety, and pamper indolence; lest it be demanded one day, *Who hath required this at your hand?* lest, by supporting dissolute creatures in that abandoned sloth, which is the nurse of all vice, we become partakers of their guilt, and accessary to their ruin.

* Is. xxxiv. 11.

No ſplendid chariots, with their gay retinue, frequent the ſolitary avenues. No needy ſteps, with chearful expectations, beſiege the once bountiful gate. But all is a miſerable, forlorn, hideous pile of rubbiſh.

Since riches ſo often take to themſelves wings, and fly away; ſince houſes, great and fair, reel upon their foundations, and ſo ſoon tumble into duſt; how wiſe, how ſalutary, is our divine MASTER's advice! *Make to yourſelves friends with the mammon of unrighteouſneſs; that, when* the world fails around *you*, when the ſprings of nature *fail* within you; *they*, as witneſſes of your charity, and vouchers for the ſincerity of your faith, *may receive you into everlaſting habitations* *.—This is to lay up treaſure *for ourſelves* †: whereas, whatever elſe we amaſs, is for our heirs, for our ſucceſſors, for we know not who. This wealth is truly and emphatically called *our own* ‡: it is an advowſon; we have the perpetuity. Whereas, whatever elſe we poſſeſs, is ours only for a *turn*, or in *truſt*.

See the dreadful, dreadful ravages of *civil diſcord!* Where-ever that infernal fury ſtalks, ſhe marks her ſteps in blood, and leaves opulent cities a ruinous heap ||.

—What

* Luke xvi. 9. † Matth. vi. 20. ‡ Luke xvi. 12.

|| The effects of what *Virgil* calls *bella, horrida bella*, were never diſplayed in colours that *glow*, and with figures that *alarm*, like thoſe which are uſed by the prophet *Jeremiah*, chap. iv. 19. &c. As this is perhaps the greateſt maſter-piece of the kind, the reader will permit me to enrich the notes with a tranſcript of the paſſage.

Firſt we *ſee*, or rather we *feel*, the effects of war on the *human mind*; the keeneſt anguiſh, and the deepeſt diſmay. "My "bowels! my bowels! I am pained at my very heart. My "heart maketh a noiſe in me; I cannot hold my peace: be"cauſe thou haſt heard, O my ſoul, the ſound of the trumpet, "the alarm of war.—Deſtruction upon deſtruction is cried; "for the land is ſpoiled. Suddenly are my tents ſpoiled, and "my curtains in a moment.—How long ſhall I ſee the ſtan"dard, and hear the ſound of the trumpet?"

Then we ſee the diſmal devaſtations of war; and who does

—What thanks then, what ardent and ceaseless thanks, are due to that all-superintending, ever-gracious LORD, who has dashed the torch from her hand; has broke her murderous weapons; and driven the baleful pest from our *island!*—May the same almighty goodness shortly banish the accursed monster from all lands! banish the monster, with her hated associate rapine, and her insatiable purveyor ambition, to the deepest hell. Branded with everlasting infamy, and bound in adamantine chains, *there* let them gnash their teeth, and bite the inevitable curb!—While *Peace*, descending from her native heaven, bids her olives spring amidst the joyful nations; and *Plenty*, in league with Commerce, scatters blessings from her copious horn. While *Gladness* smiles in every eye; and *Love*, extensive universal love, levelling the partition-wall of bigotry, cements every heart in brotherly affection.

Near those heaps of havock, lies the spot, ever-memorable and still revered, on which an obstinate and fatal battle was fought.—The husbandman, as he breaks his fallow land, or rends the grassy turf, often discovers the horrid implements, and the more horrid effects, of that bloody conflict. He starts, to hear his coulter strike upon the bosses of a rusty buckler, or gride over the edge of a blunted sword. He turns pale, to see human bones thrown up before his plough;

not shudder at the sight! the whole country laid in ruins! deprived of all its ornaments, and all its inhabitants! reduced to a *solitude* and a *chaos*. "I beheld the earth, and lo! it was "without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no "light.—I beheld the mountains, and lo! they trembled, and "all the hills moved lightly.—I beheld, and lo! there was "no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.—I be-"held, and lo! the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all "the cities thereof were broken down, at the presence of "the LORD, and by his fierce anger."

If, after all this profusion of imagery, *bold* and *animated* even to astonishment, we can have any relish for the cold correctness of a *Heathen* genius, we may find something of the same nature in *Horace*, lib. II. Od. 1.

plough; and ſtands aghaſt to think, that, in cutting his *furrow*, he opens a *grave*.—The grey-headed ſire often relates to his grandſons, hanging with eager attention on the tale, and trembling for the event; relates the diſmal, the glorious deeds of that important day.—How the fields, now covered with waving crops, were then loaded with mangled and ghaſtly corpſes. How the paſtures, now green with herbage, were then drenched and incrimſoned with human gore.

" On *that* extended common," he ſays, " where the " buſy ſhepherd is erecting his hurdled citadel, the " tents were ſpread, and the banners diſplayed; the " ſpears briſtled in air, and the burniſhed helmets glit- " tered to the ſun.—On *yonder* riſing ground, where " the friſking lambs play their harmleſs frolics, ſtood " the martial files, clad in mail, and ranged in battle- " array; ſtood war, with all its collected horrors, " like ſome portentous cloud, ready to burſt into an " immediate ſtorm.—On the *nearer* plain, where the " quiet ſteed grazes in ſafety, and thoſe ſober oxen " chew the juicy herb, the fierce encounter mixed. " There, the javelins, launched from nervous arms, " and aimed by vengeful eyes, flew and reflew, whiz- " zing with death. The arrows lightened * from the " ſtrings; and drenched their keen points, and dipped " their feathery wings in blood.—Soon as this ſhower " of miſſive ſteel ceaſed, inſtantly outſprung thou-

 " ſands

* *Hab.* iii. 11. ברק חניתך literally tranſlated, preſents us with that beautifully-bold figure, *the lightening of thy ſpear.*—Which, with innumerable other graces of ſpeech, that give dignity and ſpirit to our modern compoſitions, are borrowed from the language of *Zion*; are tranſplanted from the ſchool of the prophets.—If we ſtart into a pleaſing amazement, at *Homer's* Ἐφυ μανῆναι; have we not equal reaſon to be charmed and ſurpriſed at *Nahum's* יתהוללו הרכב? every chariot *raged* with violence and impetuoſity; was eager, was even *mad* to deſtroy. Nah. ii. 5.

" ſands of flaming ſwords. They claſh on the bra-
" zen ſhields; they cut their way through the riven
" armour; and ſheath their blades in many a gallant
" dauntleſs heart.—Here, on this diſtinguiſhed level,
" the proud preſumptuous enemy, confident of vic-
" tory, and boaſting of their numbers, poured in
" like a flood. There, a bold determined battalion,
" of which myſelf was a part, planted themſelves like
" a rock, and broke the fierce attack.

"Then," adds the brave old warrior, "then the cow-
" ard herd fled before the vengeance of our conquer-
" ing arms. Then theſe hands ſtrewed the plains
" with a harveſt, different far from their preſent pro-
" ductions. Then *the fathers*, ſmitten with inexpreſ-
" ſible dread, *looked not back on their children* *; tho'
" ſhuddering

* For this very ſtriking, and moſt terrific image, we are obliged to the prophet *Jeremiah*: who, in a few words, but with all the pomp of horror, deſcribes the din of approaching war, and the conſternation of a vanquiſhed people. *At the noiſe of the ſtamping of the hoofs of his ſtrong horſes, at the ruſhing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers ſhall not look back unto their children, for feebleneſs of hands.* Jer. xlvii. 3.

Not to mention the thunder-like ſound of the diction; and that in a language much leſs ſonorous than the original, I appeal to every reader, whether the *laſt* circumſtance does not awaken the idea of ſo tremendous a ſcene, and ſo horrible a dread, as no words can expreſs. *Virgil* has imitated the prophet's manner, in that very delicate deſcriptive touch; where, repreſenting the prodigious alarm, excited by the yell of the infernal fury, he ſays,

Et trepidæ matres preſſere ad pectora natos.

That is, *Each frighted mother claſped the infant to her fluttering boſom.*

No one, I believe, need be informed, that the panic is painted, with a very ſuperior energy, by the poet of heaven. In the *Pagan*'s draught, the effect of fear *reſults* from the conſtitution, and coincides with the bias of humanity. Whereas, in the *prophet*'s picture, it *counteracts*, it *ſuſpends*, it entirely *overbears*,

" ſhuddering at the lifted ſpear, or ſcreaming under " the brandiſhed ſword. *The fathers looked not back* " *on their children*, though they fell among the ſlain, " gaſhed with deadly wounds; or lay expiring, in " groans of agony, under our feet."

We leave the warrior, to repeat his ſhocking ſtory, and enjoy his ſavage ſatisfaction. For calmer ſcenes, and ſofter delights, we willingly leave him.—The eye is pleaſed with the elegant gaiety of the parterre; the ear is ſoothed with the warbling melody of the grove; but *grand* objects, and the *magnificence* of things, charm and tranſport the whole man. The mind, on ſuch occaſions, ſeems to *expand* with the proſpect, and ſecretly exults in the conſciouſneſs of her greatneſs.—Intent upon theſe large and excurſive views, our friends ſcarce advert to the minuter beauties, which addreſs them on every ſide. The *ſwan*, with her ſnowy plumes, and loftily-bending head; notwithſtanding all her ſuperb air, and lordly ſtate; rows by, without exciting admiration, or obtaining notice.—Equally unnoticed is both the array, and the action of the *duck*; her gloſſy neck, and finely-chequered wings; her diving into the deep, or her darting up into day.—The *ſwallow*, ſkimming the air in wanton circles, or dipping her downy breaſt in the flood, courts their obſervation in vain.—Nor could the *finny ſholes* attract their regard, though they played before the boat in ſportive chace; or, glancing quick to the ſurface, ſhewed their pearly coats, bedropt with gold.—Thus they, engaged in ſublime, neglect inferior ſpeculations. And if the ſons of religion overlook the *diminutive*, *tranſient*, *deluſory* forms of pleaſure, which float on the

overbears, the tendereſt workings and ſtrongeſt propenſities of nature; though inſtigated, on one hand, by the moſt importunate calls of exquiſite diſtreſs; and ſtimulated on the other, by all the ſolicitations of the moſt yearning compaſſion.

the narrow ſtream of time, or flit along the ſcanty bounds of ſenſe; it is only to contemplate and enjoy a happineſs in their GOD, which is *elevated*, *ſubſtantial*, and *immortal*. Compared with which, whatever the eye can ſurvey, from pole to pole, from the riſing to the ſetting ſun, is a cockle-ſhell, a butterfly, a bubble.

From this open and enlarged ſcene, they enter the ſkirts of a vaſt, umbrageous, venerable *foreſt*.—On either ſide, the ſturdy and gigantic ſons of earth, rear their aged trunks, and ſpread their branching arms. Trees, of every hardy make, and every majeſtic form, in agreeable diſorder, and with a wild kind of grandeur, fill the aerial regions. The huge, expanſive, roaming boughs unite themſelves over the current, and diffuſe "their umbrage, broad and brown as even-"ing."—The timorous *deer* ſtart at the claſhing of the waves. Alarmed with the unuſual ſound, they look up, and gaze for a moment: then fly into covert, by various ways, and with precipitate ſpeed; vaniſhing, rather than departing, from the glade.

How *awful* to reflect, as they glide along the ſhelving ſhores, and the moſs-grown banks; as they ſail under the pendent ſhades of quivering poplar, of whiſtling fir, and the ſolemn-ſounding foliage of the oak,—how awful to reflect; "Theſe were the lonely "haunts of the *Druids*, two thouſand years ago! A-"midſt theſe duſky mazes, and ſympathetic glooms, "the penſive ſages ſtrayed. Here, they ſought, they "found, and, with all the ſolemnity of ſuperſtitious "devotion, they gathered their *miſleto* *. Here the "viſionary

* If the reader pleaſes, he may ſee theſe pompous ſolemnities deſcribed, in VANIERII *Præd. Ruſt.* p. 125, &c. Where the curious narrative of *Pliny* is embelliſhed with the harmonious numbers of *Virgil*.—With regard to the reflections occaſioned by this account; the compliments laviſhed on the *French*, their *religion*, and their *monarch*; I believe, the judicious *Proteſtant* will confeſs with me, that as our charming author

" viſionary recluſes ſhunned the tumultuous ways of " men, and traced the myſterious paths of Providence. " Here they explored the ſecrets of nature, and in- " voked their fabled gods."

Sometimes wrapt in a ſudden reverie of thought, ſometimes engaged in converſation on the ſolemn appearance of things, the voyagers ſcarce perceive their progreſs. Before they are aware, this venerable ſcene is loſt; and they find themſelves advanced upon the borders of a *beautiful lawn*. The foreſt, retiring to the right hand, in the ſhape of a creſcent, compoſed what *Milton* ſtyles, " a verdurous wall of ſtateliеſt aſpect;" and left, in the midſt, an ample ſpace for the flouriſhing of herbage.

Here, ſaid *Theron*, if you pleaſe, we will alight; and leave the bearer of our *floating ſedan*, to purſue his ceaſeleſs courſe,—to enrich the boſom of other valleys, and lave the feet of other hills,—to viſit cities, and make the tour of counties,—to reflect the image of many a ſplendid ſtructure, which adorn his banks; and, what is far more amiable, to diſtribute, all along his winding journey, innumerable conveniencies both for man and beaſt: acquiring, the farther he goes, and the more benefits he confers, a deeper flow, and a wider ſwell; to the remarkable confirmation of that beneficent maxim, *There is that ſcattereth, and yet increaſeth* *.

Theron and *Aſpaſio*, walking acroſs the ſpacious amphitheatre, ſeated themſelves at the extremity of the bend. Before them, lay a verdant area, quite even; perfectly

author has copied the language, and entered into the ſpirit of the ancients; he has alſo catched a tincture of their ſuperſtition; imbibing, together with *all* their elegancies and graces, *ſome* of their fanciful and legendary levities.

Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis
Offendar maculis. HOR.

* Prov. xi. 24.

perfectly handsome; but far from gay. *Green* was all the dress, without any mixture of gaudy flowers, or glittering colours. Only, now-and-then, a gentle breeze, skimming over the undulating mead, impressed a varying wavy gloss on its surface. The whole seemed to resemble the decent and sober ornaments of *maturer age*, when it has put off the trappings, and bid adieu to the levities of youth.—The broad, transparent stream, ran parallel with the lips * of the channel; and drew a line of circumvallation, as it were, to guard the calm retreat. It appeared, where shaded with boughs, like a barrier of polished steel; where open to the sun, like a mirror of flowing crystal.—The eastern ages of the river, were barricaded with a kind of mountainous declivity; on whose rude and rocky sides, the timorous rabbit burrowed, and the bearded goat browzed.—Not far from the summit, two or three fountains gushed: which uniting their currents, as they trickled down the steep, formed a natural *cascade:* here it was lost in the rushy dells, or obscured by the twisting roots; there it burst again into view, and playing full in the eye of day, looked like a sheet of spouting silver.

In this romantic retirement, said *Theron*, we are quite sequestered from society. We seem to be in a world of our own; and should almost be tempted to forget, that we are encompassed with a kindred species; did not the *music* of those silver-tongued *bells*, poured from a distant steeple, and gliding along the gentle stream, bring us news of human kind.

Escaped from man, and his busy walks, methinks, we are come to the house of tranquillity. Such a deep, undisturbed composure reigns all around! It is as if some august personage was making his entrance, or some

* The *Greek*, which is above all languages happy, in its beautiful variety of *compound* words, very neatly expresses this appearance by—ισοχειλης τη γη.

ſome majeſtic being was upon the point to ſpeak, and all nature ſtood fixed in attentive expectation. No place better fitted to cheriſh, or to inſpire a *contemplative ſedateneſs*.

Obſerve the ſimplicity and grandeur of thoſe ſurrounding trees; the noble plainneſs of their verdure, and the prodigious ſtatelineſs of their aſpect. What a *ſpeck* are our gardens, and what a mere *dwarf* are our groves, compared with theſe vaſt plantations?—Here is none of your nice exactneſs, but all is irregularly and wildly great. Here are no traces of the ſhears, nor any footſteps of the ſpade, but the handy-work of the DEITY is apparent in all.—Give *me* the ſcenes, which diſdain the puny aſſiſtance of art, and are infinitely ſuperior to the low toils of man. Give *me* the ſcenes, which ſcorn to *bribe* our attention, with a little borrowed ſpruceneſs of ſhape; but, by their own native dignity, *command* our regard. I love the proſpects, which, the moment they are beheld, ſtrike the ſoul with veneration, or tranſport it with wonder; and cry aloud, in the ear of reaſon, *Aſcribe ye greatneſs to our GOD*.—Such, I think, in a very eminent degree, is the foreſt;

——— *High waving o'er the hills,*
Or to the vaſt horizon wide diffus'd,
A boundleſs deep immenſity of ſhade.

Aſp. Solomon's refined genius ſeems to have been fond of the ſame ſituation, and delighted with the ſame objects. Therefore, at a great expence, and in the moſt curious taſte, he built *the houſe of the foreſt*.—*Iſaiah*'s divine imagination was charmed with the ſame grand ſpectacle. More frequently, than any of the prophets, he derives his illuſtrations from it. One compariſon I particularly remember. Speaking of the *Aſſyrian* king, and his military forces, he likens them to ſuch an aſſemblage of trees: *numerous*, as their amazing multitudes; *ſtrong*, as their maſſy trunks. Yet, numerous and potent as they were, they ſhould all be

brought low, and laid in the duſt. *For behold the LORD, the LORD of hoſts ſhall lop the bough with terror, and the high ones of ſtature ſhall be hewn down, and the haughty ſhall be humbled; and he ſhall cut down the thickets of his foreſt with iron, and Lebanon ſhall fall by a mighty one* *.

Then he paſſes, by a moſt beautiful tranſition, to his darling topic, the redemption of ſinners. He gives us, together with one of the fineſt contraſts † imaginable, a view of the MESSIAH and his great ſalvation. When thoſe lofty cedars are levelled with the ground, *there ſhall come a rod*, a twig ſhall ſpring *from the ſtem of Jeſſe, and a branch ſhall grow out of his roots* ‡: which, notwithſtanding its mean original, and unpromiſing appearance, ſhall rear its head to the ſkies, and extend its ſhade to the ends of the earth.

Ther. You do well, *Aſpaſio*, to recall my roving thoughts. This magnificent ſolitude had captivated my imagination, and I was giving a looſe to the uſual ſallies of my fancy. But, with a willing compliance, I turn to a more excellent ſubject.—Only I muſt aſſure you, that your remark awakens a painful idea in *my* mind, though a joyful one in your own. For my hopes, which were once high and lifted up, are now too much like that devoted proſtrate foreſt.

Aſp. My dear *Theron*, give me leave to ſay, they were never rightly founded. They were, what *Shakeſpeare* calls, *the baſeleſs fabric of a viſion.* Now the ſhadowy and tranſient hopes are demoliſhed, that ſolid and everlaſting joys may ſucceed. Let them reſt on *CHRIST*, the infinitely-glorious REDEEMER, and

* Iſ. x. 33, 34.

† This fine contraſt, and that artful tranſition are, by the injudicious diviſion of the two chapters, very much obſcured, if not quite loſt, to many readers. The chapters, I think, ſhould by no means be ſeparated; but the tenth and the eleventh, as a continuation of the ſame prophecy, ſhould be *united.*

‡ Iſ. xi. 1.

and they ſhall never be overthrown, never be removed any more.

Caſt a look upon yonder ivy. What can be more feeble? It has not ſtrength enough to withſtand the ſlighteſt blaſt. Nay, if left to itſelf, its own weight would cruſh it to the earth. Yet, by twining around the oak, how high it riſes, and how firm it ſtands! An emblem of our ſtate, and a pattern for our imitation.—Thus let us, who in ourſelves are nothing, of ourſelves can do nothing, let us fly to *CHRIST;* rely on *CHRIST;* and, as *Barnabas* (that true ſon of conſolation) ſpeaks, *cleave to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, with full purpoſe of heart* *. Let us determine to know nothing, to deſire nothing, to depend on nothing, but *JESUS CHRIST* and him crucified. Let this be the motto for our faith, this the language of our ſouls, *CHRIST is all.* Then ſhall our virtues, tho' hitherto ſmitten with a blaſt, revive as the corn; then ſhall our hopes, tho' in themſelves weaker than the ivy, mount like the cedars.

Ther. You can hardly imagine, how a ſenſe of guilt and unworthineſs oppreſſes my mind. I am often diſcouraged, and cannot bring myſelf to be ſtedfaſt in faith, or joyful through hope.

Aſp. You cannot bring yourſelf, but GOD Almighty's power and grace can bring to paſs theſe deſirable effects. And hear what the prophet ſays farther, upon the charming topic which introduced our diſcourſe. Whenever the eloquent *Iſaiah* undertakes to diſplay a truth, he gives it all the energy, all the beauty, and every heightening touch, which it is capable of receiving.—This humble ſhoot, ſpringing from the ſtem of *Jeſſe*, ſhall riſe to ſuch a pitch of elevation, that it ſhall be conſpicuous far and near, and *ſtand for an enſign of the people.* It ſhall be ſeen, not like a beacon upon the top of an hill, by the *Iſraelites* only, or the natives of a ſingle territory; but like the

* Acts xi. 23.

great luminaries of heaven, shall be visible in every country, and by the whole inhabited world.—*To it shall the Gentiles seek;* not only from the remotest, but from the most barbarous and idolatrous climes. These, even these persons, though savage in their nature, and detestable in their manners, shall be freely admitted, and find rest under his shadow. Nay, the refreshment which he yields, and the comfort which they receive, shall be not seasonable only, but of sovereign efficacy; *his rest shall be glorious* *.

From this we learn, that all the blessings of CHRIST's mediation are designed for *Gentiles;* for the most abandoned and abominable sinners.—That they are so full and consummate, as to create a calm of tranquillity; *a glorious rest*, in the most troubled, afflicted, guilty consciences.—And I dare challenge even my *Theron*'s misgiving mind, to specify any want which is not supplied, any grievance which is not redressed by the righteousness of *JESUS CHRIST*. I formerly encountered your *objections*, let me now combat your *scruples*.

Ther. Sometimes I have a deep and distressing conviction of my extreme sinfulness.—'Tis like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear.—'Tis like the vilest filth, and renders me odious to myself; how much more loathsome to the all-seeing eye?—It appears like a debt of ten thousand talents, and I have nothing, no, not any thing to pay.—Then I experience, what the *Psalmist* so pathetically laments; *My sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up: yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head*, and my heart is ready to fail: my hopes are upon the point to expire.

Asp. Then, *Theron*, fly to that just and righteous ONE, who is the strength of our hearts; the life of our hopes; and our portion for ever.

If

* Is. xi. 10.

If sin is a sore *burden;* look unto *CHRIST*, who bore it all, in his own body on the tree; and removed, entirely removed that tremendous load, which would otherwise have sunk the whole world into the nethermost hell.—If sin renders us *filthy;* let us have recourse to that blood of sprinkling, which cleanses, not from a few stains only, but from all guilt. By which the most defiled transgressors become fair as the fairest wool, nay whiter than the virgin-snows *.—If sin is a *debt* †; subjecting us to wrath, and binding us over to punishment; let us confide in that gracious SURETY, who has taken the debt upon himself, and made it all his own: and not only so, but has paid it; paid it to the uttermost farthing, to the very last mite: so that justice itself can demand no more.

Let me confirm and illustrate this comfortable truth, by a scriptural similitude. No similitudes are more exact, and none so striking. *I have blotted out as a thick cloud your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins* ‡. A little while ago, the whole expanse of yonder sky was covered with clouds. Nothing could more strongly represent a multitude of corruptions besieging the heart, and a multitude of iniquities overspreading the life.—But where is, now, that immense arrangement

* Psal. li. 7.

† By these three images, the *Psalmist* displays the horrible and destructive malignity of sin, together with the free nature and invaluable worth of evangelical forgiveness. *Blessed is he whose transgression*, as an insupportable load, (נשוי) *is bore* or *taken away; whose sin*, as being the most abominable filth, (כסוי) *is covered; unto whom the LORD imputeth not* (לא יחשיב) that most ruinous of all debts, *iniquity*.—It is pleasing to observe the vehemence and ardour, with which the royal penitent speaks on this favourite topic. He breaks out with a kind of holy *abruptness*, and pours his soul in a *variety* of warm expressions; as one who thought, he could not possibly enter upon the subject *too soon*, or dwell upon it *too long*, Psal. xxxii. 1, 2.

‡ Is. xliv. 22.

arrangement of gloomy vapours? The sun has shone them, and the wind has swept them, clean away. There are none, neither great nor small, remaining. From one end of the wide-extended hemisphere to the other, we see nothing but the clear and beautiful blue of the firmament. *So*, saith the SPIRIT of GOD to the true believer, *so totally* is your guilt, however horrid and enormous, done away through the dying *JESUS*.

Ther. It is not possible to conceive, nor will the whole creation afford, a more exquisitely-fine comparison. Perhaps nothing can so emphatically describe the most prodigious multitude, entirely obliterated, without the *least trace* of their former existence.—But I am not only chargeable with *past* iniquities; I am also liable to daily miscarriages. I relapse into sin; and when I would do good, evil is present with me.—Nay, my best hours are not free from sinful infirmities, nor my best duties from sinful imperfections; which, like a worm at the core of the fruit, eat away the vigour of my graces, and tarnish the beauty of my services.

Asp. Because, through the frailty of your mortal nature, you cannot always stand upright; because even the *just man falleth* daily, and daily contracteth defilement; therefore *a fountain is opened for sin and for uncleanness* *. The blood and atonement of *CHRIST* are compared to a heavenly fountain. In which polluted sinners may wash daily, wash hourly; and be constantly, perfectly clean.—A *cistern* may fail; may be broken or exhausted. But it is the property of a real fountain, never to be dried up, always to yield its waters. Such is the efficacy of *CHRIST*'s death; not to be diminished by universal and by incessant use. It *removes the iniquity of the land* †. *It takes away the sin of the world* ‡. It is new, for our application, every morning; new, for this blessed purpose, every moment.

* Zech. xiii. 1. † Zech. iii. 9. ‡ John i. 29.

moment. On which account, it makes complete provision for our cleansing, our restoration, and our comfort.—Especially, as it is not only sovereign in itself, and always free for our approach, but is ever pleaded by a great HIGH PRIEST in our behalf. Therefore the inspired Casuist directs us to *this* source of consolation, under all the upbraidings of conscience, and all the remains of inbred depravity. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the FATHER, JESUS CHRIST the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins* *.

We; St *John* reckons himself in the number of those frail offending creatures, who stand in need of CHRIST, as a perpetual Intercessor. This is written, not to encourage us in the commission of sin; but that we may be the less discouraged, under a sense of our infirmities.—We *have;* not we possibly may, but we actually have. A soul burdened with guilt, cannot be satisfied, cannot be eased, with a bare *perhaps*. It is therefore positively affirmed, as a matter of established certainty, of which we should not admit a doubt.—We have for our advocate, not a *mean* person, but HIM who received an illustrious testimony from the most excellent glory, *This is my beloved SON*†.—Not a *guilty* person, who stands in need of pardon for himself, but *JESUS CHRIST the righteous*.——Not a mere petitioner, who relies purely upon liberality; but one who has *merited*, fully merited whatever he asks; *he is the propitiation for our sins*, has paid our ransom, and purchased our peace.——In consequence of which, he *claims* rather than asks our renewed, our irrevocable forgiveness.—This he claims, not from an *unrelenting* Judge, but from his FATHER and our FATHER.—And can such a plea meet with a repulse? Can such an advocate miscarry in his suit?——If the prophets of old were reckoned *the*

* 1 John ii. 1. † 2 Pet. i. 17.

the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof *; because, like their ancestor *Jacob*, they had power with GOD, and prevailed in prayer; O! what a defence! what a security, is the divinely-excellent, and ever-prevailing intercession of JESUS CHRIST.

"Your graces," you complain, "are sullied, and "your services defective."—Then, my dear friend, renounce them in point of confidence; and gladly receive, cordially embrace, the all-perfect righteousness of your LORD. So shall your justification be *complete;* and your services, though deficient in themselves, be "*accepted* in the BELOVED."—I have somewhere seen, painted upon a flat surface, an awkward and disagreeable countenance; in which was nothing regular, nothing graceful, but every feature disproportionate. Yet this very face, reflected from a cylindrical mirror, has put off its deformity; the lineaments became well adjusted; symmetry connected every part, and beauty smiled throughout the whole. —Like the *former* our virtues appear, when compared with the immaculate purity of GOD, or the sublime perfection of his law. But they acquire the amiableness of the *latter*, when presented to the FATHER by our divine MEDIATOR, and recommended by his inconceivably-precious oblation†.

Milton,

* 2 *Kings* ii. 12. xiii. 14. There is a peculiar beauty, and most appositе significancy, in this *proverbial* saying, as used by the ancient *Israelites*. *Horses* and *chariots* were deemed, in those ages, the principal strength of the battle, the most formidable apparatus of war. Of these the *Israelites* were entirely destitute. Their GOD had expressly forbidden them to multiply horses; and we never read of their bringing any considerable number of cavalry into the field.—But, so long as they enjoyed the presence of their prophets, they wanted not this arm of flesh. They had more than an equivalent for chariots and horses, in the *fervent* the *effectual* prayers of those holy men of GOD.

† *They*, the persons and performances of frail men, *shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, saith the LORD*, Is. lx.

Milton, taking his hint from the revelations of St *John*, repreſents our great HIGH PRIEST in this glorious and delightful attitude; repreſents him offering up the ſupplications and penitential duties of our firſt parents; mixing with them the incenſe of his own merits; and thus interceding before the throne:

See, FATHER! what firſt fruits on earth are ſprung
From thy implanted grace in man! Theſe ſighs
And prayers, which, in this golden cenſer mix'd
With incenſe, I thy PRIEST before thee bring.
——Now therefore bend thine ear
To ſupplication; hear his ſighs though mute!
Unſkilful with what words to pray, let ME
Interpret for him; ME his advocate
And propitiation. All his works on ME,
Good, or not good, ingraft: MY merit thoſe
Shall perfect; and for theſe MY death ſhall pay *.

The poet's words are very *emphatical*. Yet words can no more expreſs the *prevalence* of our LORD's negotiation, than the picture of the ſun can diffuſe its ſplendor, or convey its warmth.

Ther. My ſpiritual wants are many. I have many duties to diſcharge, and many temptations to withſtand; many corruptions to mortify, and many graces to

lx. 7.—Which is explained by St *Peter*'s comment; *Ye are an holy prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable unto GOD by JESUS CHRIST*, 1 Pet. ii. 5.; and ſtill farther aſcertained by St *Paul*'s practice; who, when he addreſſes the MAJESTY of heaven with any petition, or preſents the tribute of praiſe, preſumes not to do either the one or the other, but in the bleſſed MEDIATOR's name: becauſe, ſecluded from this grand recommendation, they would be *offenſive* to the awful JEHOVAH, "as ſmoke in his noſtrils;" accompanied with it, they are *acceptable*, "as the ſweet-"ſmelling incenſe."

* Par. Loſt, book XI. l. 22. *&c.*

to cultivate, or rather to acquire. Yet have I no ſtock, and no ſtrength of my own.

Aſp. I rejoice, that my *Theron* is ſenſible of his own indigence. The good LORD keep us both, in this reſpect, as little children; whoſe whole dependence is upon their nurſe's care, or their parent's bounty! Then may we, having ſuch a ſenſe of our poverty, and having a great HIGH PRIEST over the houſe of GOD, come boldly to the throne of grace. We may apply, thro' the righteouſneſs of *JESUS CHRIST*, for all needful ſuccour, and for every deſirable bleſſing.—If *Solomon* could ſay, *LORD, remember David, and all his trouble.* If *Moſes* could ſay, *LORD, remember Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob thy ſervants.* How much more confidently may *we* ſay "LORD, "remember *JESUS*, the Son of thy love! remem-"ber *JESUS*, and all his ſufferings; *JESUS*, and "all his merits. Shall *they* be ſent empty away, who "have their SAVIOUR's obedience to plead?"—No verily. Tho' they are altogether unworthy in themſelves, yet worthy is the LAMB that was ſlain, for whoſe ſake their petitions ſhould be granted, and their every neceſſity ſupplied.

Let me repeat to you a moſt beautiful and encouraging portion of ſcripture; which you may look upon, under all your wants, as a *charte blanche* put into your hand by GOD all-ſufficient: *Having therefore, brethren, boldneſs to enter into the holieſt by the blood of JESUS, by a new and living way which he has conſecrated for us, thro' the veil, that is to ſay, his fleſh; and having an HIGH PRIEST over the houſe of GOD; let us draw near with a true heart, in full aſſurance of faith* *.

The apoſtle, in this place, and throughout this whole epiſtle, alludes to the *Moſaic* ordinances, in order to ſhew, that the privileges of the *Chriſtian* diſpenſation were typified by, yet are greatly ſuperior to, thoſe

* Heb. x. 19, 20, 21, 22.

those of the *Jewish*.—Among the *Jews*, none but the *high priest* was permitted to set a foot within the holy of holies; and he, only on the solemn day of expiation. Whereas, *all Christians* are allowed to enter into the immediate presence of the most high GOD; may have the nearest access to HIM, who dwells in the heaven of heavens; and this, not once in the year only, but at all times, and on all occasions.——The high priest never made that awful approach, but with the blood of a *slaughtered* animal. We have blood of infinitely-richer value, to atone for our failings, and recommend our addresses; even the blood of the *crucified* JESUS.—*Aaron* entered through the veil of the temple; a way, which was soon to become antiquated, and for ever to be abolished. *We* enter by a far more noble way; by the flesh of our blessed REDEEMER; given as a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Which way is both *new* and *living;* such as never waxes old, will subsist to the end of time, and leads to eternal life.——Trusting in this sacrifice, and entering by this way, which are consecrated on purpose for our use, we may not only draw near, but draw near *with boldness*, with an humble filial confidence; and present our supplications with *faith*,—with *assurance* of faith,—with *full* assurance of faith.

How strong is the contrast, and how fine the gradation! how precious the doctrine, and how free the privilege! What shall we fear, if we believe this doctrine? what can we lack, if we improve this privilege?——And why should we not believe the former, why should we not improve the latter? Since they both are founded, not on any excellent endowments, not in any recommending actions of our own, but *purely, solely, entirely* on the blood of JESUS CHRIST.

Ther. There may come seasons of *desertion*, when all graces are languid, if not dead; when the light of GOD's countenance is suspended, if not turned into darkness; and the man is more like a lifeless log than

a zealous *Chriſtian*. Theſe frames of mind I have heard mentioned, and I begin to know ſomething of them by experience.

Aſp. Then, *Theron*, when you *walk in darkneſs, and ſee no light* of ſenſible comfort, *truſt in the name*, the unchangeable grace, *of the LORD; and ſtay upon* the righteouſneſs, the conſummate righteouſneſs, of *your GOD* *. This is not barely my advice, but the direction of an infallible guide.—This agrees alſo with the character of a real *Chriſtian*, as it is moſt exactly drawn by an unerring pen; *We rejoice in CHRIST JESUS, and have no confidence in the fleſh*†; no reliance on any thing of our own, either for preſent joy, or future glory.

To rely on the elevation of our ſpirits, or the enlargement of our devotion, is like building our houſe upon the *ice;* which may abide for a ſeaſon, but, upon the firſt alteration of weather, ceaſes to be a foundation, and becomes "water that runneth apace." Whereas, to derive our conſolation from the MEDIATOR's righteouſneſs, and JEHOVAH's faithfulneſs, is to build our edifice upon the *rock;* which "may not be removed, but ſtandeth faſt for ever." The former of theſe, even amidſt all our changes, is invariably the ſame. The latter, notwithſtanding all our unworthineſs, is inviolably ſure. Therefore the *fruit* of that righteouſneſs is peace, and the *effect* of this faithfulneſs

* Iſa. l. 10.

† *Phil.* iii. 3. *Exactly drawn.*—Perhaps there is no where extant, a finer, a more complete, or ſo lively a *picture* of the true Chriſtian. 'Tis in *miniature*, I own; but it comprehends all the *maſter*-lines and every *diſtinguiſhing* feature. *We are they, who worſhip GOD in the ſpirit;* with the ſpiritual homage of a renewed heart; with faith, love, reſignation. *And rejoice in CHRIST JESUS;* in him look for all our acceptance with GOD; from him derive all the peace of our minds; and on him place all the hope of our final felicity. *And have no confidence in the fleſh;* renouncing ourſelves, in every view, as unprofitable ſervants; diſclaiming all our own works and attainments, as defective ſervices.

faithfulneſs is, if not rapturous joy, yet *quietneſs and aſſurance for ever* *.

So that, when it is winter in my ſoul, and there ſeems to be a dearth on all my ſenſible delights, I would ſtill ſay with the Pſalmiſt, "*Why art thou ſo* "*diſquieted, O my ſoul? CHRIST* is the ſame a- "midſt all thy derelictions. *He is a green fir-tree* †, "which never loſes its verdure. Under his ſhadow "thou mayſt always find repoſe. His merit and at- "onement are ſtill mighty to ſave; they conſtitute "an everlaſting and infinite righteouſneſs. The pro- "miſes of GOD, through his mediation, *are yea, and* "*amen* ‡; are unqueſtionably and unalienably thine."

Ther. 'Tis very probable, I may meet with *afflictions*; death in my family, or diſeaſe in my perſon. Diſappointments may fruſtrate my deſigns. Providence may wear a frowning aſpect, as though the LORD had a controverſy with his ſinful creature, and was making him to poſſeſs the iniquities of his youth. And what will be ſufficient to ſupport and to chear, in ſuch a gloomy hour ‖?

Aſp. The righteouſneſs of *CHRIST*.—Nothing is ſo ſovereign, to calm our fears, and remove all apprehenſions of the divine wrath. Apprehenſions of the divine wrath would draw the curtains of horror around our ſick beds, and throw upon our languiſhing eye-lids the ſhadow of death §. But a believing improvement

* Iſ. xxxii. 17. † Hoſ. xiv. 8. ‡ 2 Cor. i. 20.

‖ The ſufficiency of *CHRIST*'s righteouſneſs, to anſwer all theſe important and delightful ends, is excellently diſplayed in Mr RAWLIN's ſermons, on *CHRIST the righteouſneſs of his people*. In which the public have ſeen the grand and amiable eſſentials of the goſpel, delivered in maſculine language; defended by nervous reaſoning; and animated with a lively devotion.

§ Alluding to that deſcription of tribulation and anguiſh, which, I believe, no perſon of ſenſibility can read without ſhuddering; *My face is foul with weeping, and on my eye-lids is the ſhadow of death*, Job xvi. 16.

provement of *CHRIST*'s satisfaction for our offences, *clears up* the mournful scene, and *takes away* the sting of tribulation.

Attending to this great propitiation, the sufferer sees his sins forgiven, and his GOD reconciled. From whence he concludes, that the severest afflictions are only fatherly corrections; shall not exceed his ability to bear; and shall assuredly obtain a gracious issue. He can fetch comfort from that chearing word, *I will be with him in trouble;* and expect the accomplishment of that most consolatory promise, *I will deliver him, and bring him to honour* *.—These supports have enabled the saints, to kiss the rod, and bless the hand, which chastised them; to possess their souls, not in patience only, but in thankfulness also. While they have *looked inward*, and discerned their absolute need of these bitter but salutary medicines; have *looked upward*, and beheld the cup in a most wise and tender PHYSICIAN's hand; have *looked forward*, with a joyful hope, to that better world; where GOD will wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more sorrow, nor any more pain.

Ther. The last occasion of need is the trying hour of *death*, and the tremendous day of *judgment*. Will this righteousness carry us, with safety, through the darksome valley, and present us, with acceptance, at the dreadful tribunal?

Asp. It will; it will.—This silences all the curses of the law, and disarms death of every terror. To believe in this righteousness, is to meet death at our SAVIOUR's side; or rather, like good old *Simeon*, with the SAVIOUR in our arms.—*They overcame*, says the beloved disciple, they overcame the last enemy, not by natural fortitude, or philosophic resolution, but *by the blood of the* LAMB †; by a believing application of the victorious REDEEMER's merit.—*I know*, adds the heroic apostle, *whom I have believed;*

* Psal. xci. 15. † Rev. xii. 11.

believed *; I am assured, that my JESUS is infinitely faithful, and will not desert me; that his ransom is absolutely sufficient, and cannot deceive me. Therefore, with a holy bravery, he bids defiance to death; or rather, triumphs over it, as a vanquished enemy; *Thanks be to GOD who giveth us the victory, thro' our LORD JESUS CHRIST*†!—Nay, through the wonderful efficacy of CHRIST's propitiation, *death is ours*‡; not our foe, but our friend and deliverer. We may number it among our treasures; and rest satisfied, that *to die, is gain*.

What? though our flesh see corruption; tho' this body, vile at present, be made viler still, by dwelling amidst worms, and mouldering in the dust? yet thro' HIS righteousness, who is the resurrection and the life, it shall shake off the dishonours of the grave; it shall rise to a new and illustrious state of existence; it shall be made like the *glorious* and *immortal* body of our triumphant LORD.—If the body be so refined, so exalted; what will be the dignity, what the perfection, of the soul? or rather, of soul and body both, when they are happily and indissolubly united, at the resurrection of the just?—Shall they have any thing to fear, when the judgment is set, and the books are opened? 'Tis probable there will be no accusation, 'tis certain *there is no condemnation, to them that are in CHRIST JESUS*||. Who shall lay any thing to their charge? *It is GOD*,—— not man, or angel, or any creature, but GOD,—— *that justifies* them. The GOD whose law was broke, the GOD to whom vengeance belongeth, he himself pronounces them *innocent*, because their iniquities have been laid upon CHRIST; he himself pronounces them *righteous*, because they are interested in the obedience of their REDEEMER; on these accounts, he himself pronounces them *blessed*, and gives them

* 2 Tim. i. 12. † 1 Cor. xv. 57. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 22.
|| Rom. viii. 1.

them an *abundant entrance* into the joy of their LORD.

But what can expreſs, or who can imagine their happineſs, when they take up their abode, in the palaces of heaven, amidſt the choirs of angels, and under the light of GOD's countenance? when they poſſeſs *the hope of righteouſneſs* *; when they wear *the crown of righteouſneſs* †; and receive that great, that eternal ſalvation, which is an adequate recompence for the humiliation and agonies of *JESUS CHRIST the righteous* ‡.

Come then, my dear *Theron*, let us henceforth be as branches, ingrafted into the heavenly VINE; derive all our ſap, all our moiſture, all our conſolation, from his fulneſs. Let us live upon our all-ſufficient REDEEMER, as the *Iſraelites* ſubſiſted on their manna from heaven, and their waters from the rock, and not wiſh for *other*, as we cannot poſſibly enjoy *better* ſuſtenance.

Ther. Is this the meaning of our LORD's exhortation, when he ſhews the neceſſity of *eating his fleſh*, and *drinking his blood?*

Aſp. 'Tis the very ſame. A repeated and inceſſant application of our SAVIOUR's merits, for all the purpoſes of piety and ſalvation, is the kernel of this nut, the meaning of this metaphor.—*When* we habitually advert to JESUS CHRIST, as dying for our ſins, and riſing again for our juſtification; performing all righteouſneſs, that we may be entitled to an eternal crown; and interceding in heaven, that we may be filled with all the fulneſs of God: *then* we eat his fleſh, and drink his blood: then we derive a life of ſolid comfort, and real godlineſs, from his mediatorial offices; juſt as we derive the continuance of our natural life, from the daily uſe of alimentary recruits.

Ther.

* Gal. v. 5. † 2 Tim. iv. 8. ‡ 1 John ii. 1.

Ther. Your discourse brings to my remembrance that magnificent and beautiful passage in scripture, where CHRIST is called THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Your doctrine sets the comparison in a very advantageous light; gives it the utmost force, and the greatest propriety.——The righteousness of CHRIST, according to your account, is as extensively useful in the *Christian* life, as the beams of that grand luminary are in material nature.—The sun fills the *air;* where it diffuses light and creates day.—The sun penetrates the *ocean;* from whence it exhales vapours, and forms the clouds.—In the *vegetable* creation, the sun raises the sap, and protrudes the gems; unfolds the leaves, and paints the blossom; distends the fruit, and concocts the juices.—Turn we to the *animal* world; the sun delights the eye, and gladdens the heart. It awakens millions of insects into being; and imparts that general joy, which every sensible creature feels. Indeed *there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*

Asp. Thus the LORD JESUS CHRIST, that true and only *Sun of righteousness*, *arises* on his people *with healing in his wings* *. So various, so efficacious, and so extensive are his influences. Like a *sun*, he enlightens and enlivens; like *wings*, he cherishes and protects; like a remedy, he *heals* and restores: and all, by virtue of his righteousness, on account of his *righteousness*.—Nor can we doubt, nor need we wonder, if we consider its nature and its author. Its *nature;* it is consummately excellent, has every kind, and every degree of perfection. Its *author;* it is the righteousness and obedience of that incomparable PERSON, in whom *dwells all the fullness of the GODHEAD.*

It must therefore,—you will permit me to sum up in a word, what has been displayed at large,—it must be fully answerable to the *demands* of the *law*, even in its highest purity, and utmost exactness.——It is infinitely superior to the *demerit* of *sin*, and entirely absolves

* Mal iv. 2.

solves from all guilt, entirely exempts from all condemnation.—It is a most valid and never-failing plea, against the *accusations* of *Satan*, and the challenges of conscience.—It establishes an undoubted *title* to *every* blessing, whether in time or in eternity, whether of grace or of glory.—It is a sure support for the Christian, in an hour of *desertion*, and in the agonies of *death*. Casting anchor on this bottom, he may dismiss every fear, and ride out every storm. Leaning upon this staff, he may go down to the repose of the grave; and neither he appalled at the solemn harbingers of dissolution, nor terrified at its far more awful consequences.—The merit of this righteousness, and the power of its DIVINE AUTHOR, will unseal the tomb; will bring forth the sleeping dust from the chambers of putrefaction; and build up the whole man into immortality and glory. By this he will be presented *without spot* *; presented *faultless* †; yea, be presented *perfect* ‡, and with *exceeding joy*, before the throne.

What a gift then is the *righteousness of CHRIST!* —Blessed be GOD, for all the indulgent dispensations of Providence! Blessed be GOD, for all the beneficial productions of nature! But above all, blessed be GOD, for the transcendent and unspeakable gift of *CHRIST*,—for the unsearchable and infinite treasures of HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

* Eph. v. 27. † Jude 24. ‡ Col. i. 28.

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